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Vancouver metro

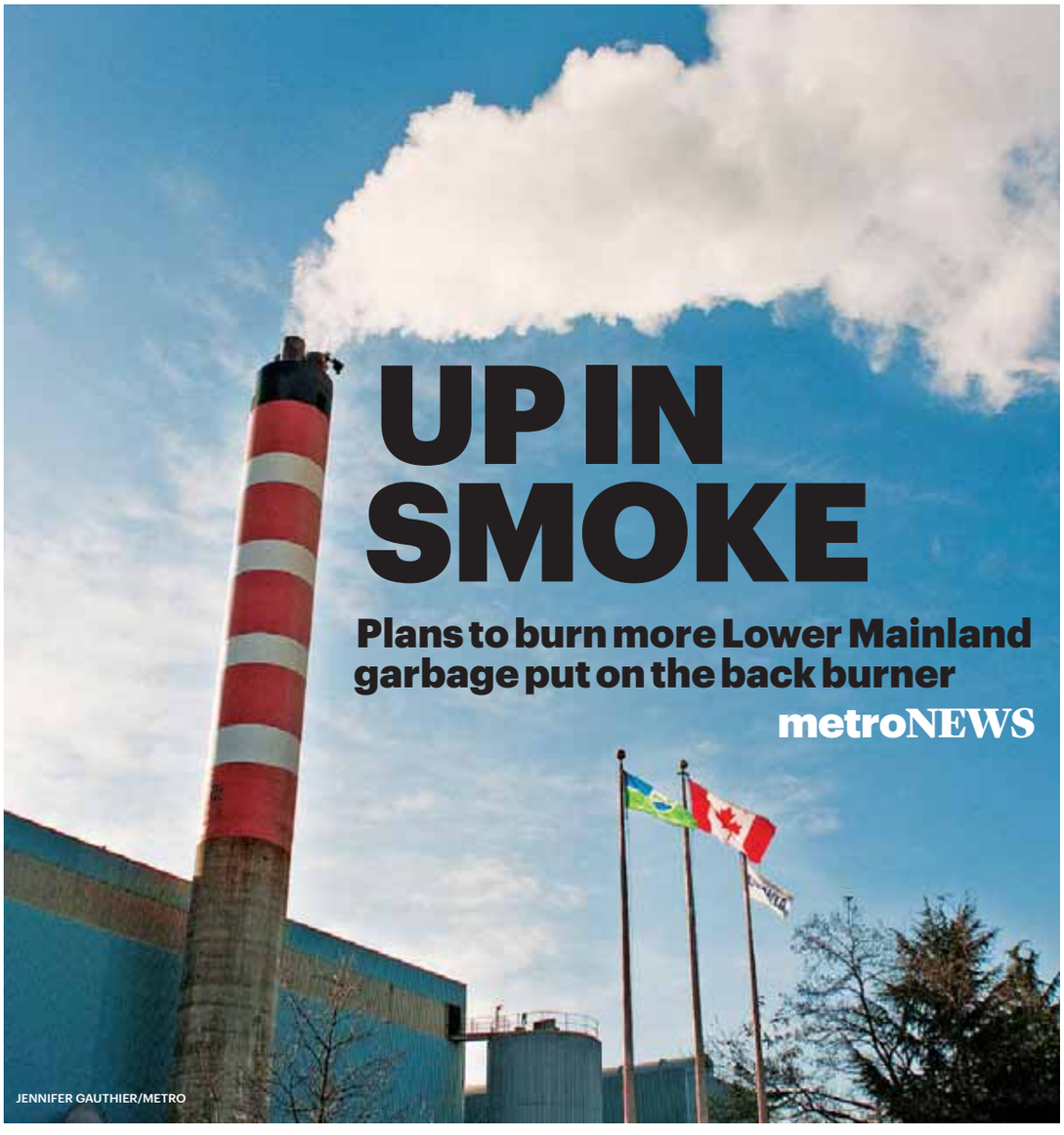
Your essential daily news | WEEKEND DECEMBER 11-13, 2015

High 9°C/Low 3°C Mostly sunny

GOLDEN GLOBES

The nods, the snubs *and* the BIG OOPS!

metroLIFE



UP IN SMOKE

Plans to burn more Lower Mainland garbage put on the back burner

metroNEWS

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

Bike lanes are on the horizon

CITY COUNCIL

Cyclists can expect at least 12 new routes

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Drivers, get ready to share more streets with bike lanes. Cyclists, get ready to share the bike lanes with skateboarders.

A plan to build a dozen new bike lanes, eight of them downtown, and upgrade more than a dozen more over the next five years got a warm reception from most councillors on Thursday. Council received the plans and approved a one-year pilot project to allow skateboarders in separated bike lanes in a bid to get them off sidewalks.

Staff promised thorough public consultation before building any major bike corridor, noting that council will have to approve each one separately. Notable routes include the Cambie and Granville bridges, Kent, Water Street and Commercial Drive.

But there's already a battle brewing over some of the lanes, notably the one on Commercial Drive.

Nick Pogor of the Commercial Drive Business Society, which represents 750 businesses and property owners, accused the city of a lack of consultation and poor transparency in the process thus far.

Pogor said a separated bike lane "may threaten the economic viability of many of the businesses" because he believes it will take away parking and increase congestion.

He noted that two bike lanes exist within four blocks of Commercial Drive, so it doesn't make sense for taxpayers to pay for a third right on the Drive.

Non-Partisan Association Coun. George Affleck seemed to agree, stating, "This is kind of like putting a bike lane on Robson Street."

But Vision Vancouver Coun. Geoff Meggs noted that shops on Hornby are still there despite concerns that a bike lane would kill business.

Upcoming fights aside, the plan was welcomed by the cycling community. Tanya Paz, the chair of the city's Active Transportation Policy Council, praised the plan and applauded the decision to let skateboarders in bike lanes.

"Once I reach a protected bike lane, every time my shoulders relax... I want skateboarders to feel this too," she said.

"Our communities are ready to give it a try."

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Closed Sales - 10 closed deals
(including partnerships and wholesale)
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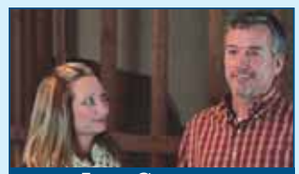
Pending Sales - 4 Deals
On Market - 3 Deals
Deals Under Rehab - 4 Deals
Projected Profits - $2,650,000
That's 22 Deals total since they went to Bus Tour Sept 2014

Melva & Leon

1st Property made $37,328
2nd Property made $52,865
3rd Property made $100,105
Total of $190,298 in profit in 6 months. Since then...
2 Cash Flow properties at $2,500/mth



John Cooksey

Attended Bus Tour Sept 2014
4 Properties purchased first 6 mths
1st Flip - profit $5,000
2nd Flip - profit $8,000
1 in construction - estimated profit $80,000
1 Commercial Property (4 commercial spaces, 17 residential) - estimated Cash Flow $34,000/mth
1 Purchased Duplex - $800/mth

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metro NEWS
Your essential daily news

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali comes out swinging against Donald Trump's comments. **World**

Tenant protection boosted

RENTAL HOUSING

Compensation to rise for costs of forced relocations

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Tenants who lose their homes when their apartments are knocked down will get more compensation from developers under the new tenant relocation policy approved by city council Thursday.

Developers who want to kick people out for renovations — this happens to approximately 313 units annually, according to city data — must now provide tenants with up to six months of free rent depending on length of tenure, pay for a flat moving fee of up to $1,000, offer them first right of refusal of the new unit at 20 per cent below market rates and present them three options of new places to rent at average market rates.

For vulnerable tenants, landlords must try to find apartment options that cost no more than 10 per cent above their current rents.

The policy does not apply to people renting condos or basement suites directly from owners.

Critics representing seniors, renters and people in social housing said the new policy doesn't go far enough to protect tenants in a city with skyrocketing housing costs, as even average rents can be a big jump for long-term tenants.

West End apartments tower over Stanley Park's Lost Lagoon. Advocates argued more protection is needed. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

"Even a 10 per cent hike can be steep for some people," NDP MLA Spencer Chandra-Herbert told council, adding folks often stop by his office worrying they'll be pushed out of the city.

> **There's no question we have a huge affordability crunch in Vancouver and renters are feeling pressure like never before.**
> Mayor Gregor Robertson

Sharon Isaak, Gordon Neighbourhood House housing outreach coordinator, worried the policy isn't strong enough to protect the thousands of seniors living in the West End if developers decide to replace aging buildings.

It's difficult to find a place to rent in the neighbourhood period — it has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the city at approximately 0.5 per cent — let alone a place costing only 10 per cent over a person's current rent, especially when multiple dislocated tenants are competing for apartments.

Isaak suggested the city could go further by asking developers to provide lump sums to people who waive their first right of refusal, for example.

Non-Partisan Association councillors did not support the new policy, arguing it wasn't realistic and there wasn't enough consultation with small-building owners.

But Mayor Gregor Robertson, Vision Vancouver councillors and Green Party Coun. Adriane Carr argued that while this policy doesn't solve the rental crisis, it's a step forward for renters.

"There's no question we have a huge affordability crunch in Vancouver and renters are feeling pressure like never before," Robertson said. "Hopefully it's enough to start turning the tide."

Advocates were, however, generally supportive of the city's plan to lobby the province for changes to the Residential Tenancy Act to better protect renters.

Metro Vancouver shelves plan for new incinerator

INFRASTRUCTURE

Recycling and reduction of waste have cut flow of garbage

Neal Hall
For Metro | Vancouver

After years of preliminary work, the Metro Vancouver regional district announced Thursday that its plan to build a new $480-million garbage incinerator has been put on ice.

"Due to uncertainty around future waste volumes and continued reduction in residual waste, Metro Vancouver has discontinued its current waste-to-energy (WTE) procurement process," Metro Vancouver announced Thursday.

The three-year process of selecting a site and a contractor to build the new facility was cancelled, largely because of collective achievement of those living in the region to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, said Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore.

"We've seen our waste flow volumes decrease quite substantially over the last few years," explained Moore, the chair of Metro Vancouver.

With the volume dropping, he said, Metro Vancouver didn't want to overbuild a new incinerator, so decided "Let's pause for a while to get a better handle on it."

When the regional district began looking five to six years ago at building a new waste-to-energy facility, the capacity needed was 500,000 tonnes a year.

A parcel of land in South Vancouver that was one of six potential sites for Metro Vancouver's planned $480 million waste-to-energy incinerator. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

"But that was reduced to 250,000 tonnes last year," Moore said, adding that waste volume is dropping again this year after the regional district imposed a ban of organic material in garbage, which now is being diverted to compost.

Metro Vancouver will take at least a year to evaluate efforts to further reduce waste, he said.

Metro Vancouver still plans to spend $30 million over the next five years to upgrade its Burnaby incinerator to improve emissions controls, Moore said.

> **We've seen our waste flow volumes decrease quite substantially over the last few years.**
> Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore

The move to delay the plan to build a new half-billion dollar incinerator was applauded by Jon Garson, president of the B.C. Chamber of Commerce.

"We feel that is a wise decision," he said Thursday, adding it is good news for both taxpayers and business.

Chilliwack Mayor Sharon Gaetz, chair of the Fraser Valley Regional District, also had high praise for the decision to cancel planning for a new incinerator.

"While we are happy that Metro Vancouver has made the decision to abandon a second facility, it does not placate us in any way," she said.

"Continuing to invest in antiquated methods of waste reduction and greenwashing it with the term 'waste-to-energy' is rather disingenuous and a shameful waste of resources. Quite simply, incinerating garbage is not efficient, clean, or safe," Gaetz said.

"The toxic by-products of burning garbage include known carcinogens. The FVRD is committed to supporting true Zero Waste strategies such as those found in material recovery facilities."

Gaetz noted that the announcement to cancel the new facility came a year after the provincial government rejected Metro's proposed Bylaw 280, which would have required waste haulers to use only Metro-based disposal facilities.

"We would welcome the opportunity to work together with Metro on more positive waste management programs going forward," she said.

Metro Vancouver said earlier that it would announce this month a shortlist of sites for one or more new incinerators.

There were 10 proposals for sites, including two in Delta, two in Nanaimo and one in Port Mellon on the Sunshine Coast. The other sites under consideration were not publicly disclosed.

The regional district was considering approving up to three incinerators to burn up to 250,000 extra tonnes a year of garbage and recover the energy.

The Burnaby incinerator, operating since 1988, already burns up to 290,000 tonnes a year — about a quarter of the region's garbage.

It generates enough electricity to power 16,000 homes and recovers about 8,000 tonnes of metals each year.

MEDICAL CARE

Pilot project hopes to resolve doctor shortage

B.C. government incentives to attract doctors are leaving residents in some areas scrambling for care because physicians go to smaller communities, says a spokesman for an association of walk-in clinics.

Mike McLoughlin, who owns such a clinic in Kelowna, said operators in some parts of the province are reducing hours or even closing. He said one of three walk-in clinics in Vernon is expected to shut down in March because of a lack of doctors.

"We've now got doctors in some small communities who seem to have a lot of time on their hands," McLoughlin said. "But in bigger centres, the doctor shortage is as bad as ever and maybe getting worse."

Golden, which has a population of less than 5,000 people, has 10 doctors accepting new patients, he said. However, only one doctor is taking new patients in the central Okanagan, home to 185,000 people, McLoughlin said.

Health Minister Terry Lake said the province can't tell doctors where they can practise.

The government's attempts in the 1990s to dictate where doctors could work ended in a court ruling in the favour of physicians on constitutional grounds, Lake said.

More doctors are now graduating in several communities around the province, and incentives are an effort to draw others who've trained elsewhere, he said.

For example, doctors who practised in a foreign country are given some extra training in B.C., and required to work in an underserved community for two years.

Those who have attended medical school outside Canada must practise in communities where they're needed most for three years in return for training they've received in B.C., Lake said.

However, Lake said the government is working with Doctors of BC to determine if some incentives have unintended consequences.

In the spring, the government expects to launch a pilot project in 14 communities around the province, including Kamloops and Kelowna, in an effort to provide needed care in so-called primary care homes.

Lake said such facilities will include a team of health professionals, including doctors, pharmacists, nurses and nurse practitioners.

Three years ago, the government launched a new program aimed at ensuring every British Columbian who wanted a family physician would have one by 2015. Earlier this year, Lake admitted the goal would not be met.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CAPTIVE CETACEANS

Senator seeks ban of whales, dolphins

A proposed bill tabled this week by Nova Scotia Senator Wilfred Moore could affect the future of the Vancouver Aquarium.

Moore's bill, Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act, would prevent the live capture of all cetaceans — whales, dolphins and porpoises — in Canada, and would ban captive breeding, importing and exporting.

It would still permit the rescue and rehabilitation of injured creatures, and research on those unable to be returned to the wild.

But the intent of the bill is to phase out cetaceans being kept in "swimming pools" rather than being free to roam in the open ocean.

There are about 50 captive whales and dolphins in Canada — at Marineland in Niagara Falls and the Vancouver Aquarium, which has six beluga whales on loan to U.S. marine parks.

50

There are about 50 captive whales and dolphins in Canada — at Marineland in Niagara Falls and the Vancouver Aquarium, which has six beluga whales on loan to U.S. marine parks.

Moore, a Liberal, first introduced the bill in the senate last June — it got to second reading before Parliament was adjourned for the federal election campaign.

He re-introduced the bill this week and already has the support of Green party leader Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands.

Although the Conservative party has the majority in the senate, Moore believes his bill has the support of some Conservative senators.

Mayor Gregor Robertson said earlier that he'd like to see the whale captivity program phased out.

John Nightingale, the chief executive of the Vancouver Aquarium, said last June that Moore's bill was misguided.

He maintains Vancouver's aquarium provides important research and education.

The Vancouver aquarium is currently undergoing a $100-million expansion that will see larger whale and dolphin tanks. It adopted new standards in 1996 that ended the capture of wild cetaceans.

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Legal win for Trinity Western

EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITY

Court reverses decision to deny law grads accreditation

The bell tower is seen at Trinity Western University in Langley on Monday August 24, 2015. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

An evangelical Christian university under fire across the country for forbidding sexual intimacy outside of heterosexual marriage has secured a decisive legal victory in its effort to open a law school in British Columbia.

B.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Christopher Hinkson ruled in favour of Trinity Western University, reversing a B.C. Law Society decision to deny accreditation for graduates of its proposed law school who want to practise in the province.

In a 43-page decision issued Thursday, Hinkson rebuked the society for breaching its duty of procedural fairness and neglecting to fully consider the school's charter rights.

The society's board of directors, known as benchers, initially accredited the school in April 2014 before reversing the decision six months later after they "acted outside their authority" by deferring to a membership vote, Hinkson wrote.

The judge ruled the benchers allowed the non-binding vote to "wrongfully fetter" their discretion and "supplant" their judgment.

"The evidence is clear ... the benchers allowed the members to dictate the outcome of the matter," wrote Hinkson.

"I accept the assertion of the petitioners that they were entitled to, and find that they were deprived of, a meaningful opportunity to present their case fully and fairly."

Trinity Western has drawn controversy over a long-standing requirement that all students and staff sign a covenant pledging to abstain from sexual intimacy outside of marriage between one man and one woman.

Spokeswoman Amy Robertson said Trinity Western is celebrating Thursday's ruling.

"We are really excited," said Robertson. "The court has recognized that freedom of religion and freedom of conscience — the freedom to believe as you wish — is something that's important for all Canadians."

But University of British Columbia law professor Emma Cunliffe said the ruling focuses on the process that the society used to make its decision instead of the merits of whether approval should have been granted.

"The Law Society of British Columbia reached a good result by a bad process," Cunliffe said.

> **"The court has recognized that freedom of religion and freedom of conscience ... is something that's important."**
> Amy Robertson

"The difficulty is that it does leave those who are concerned about Trinity Western's policies with no clear avenue by which to articulate their concerns about the charter rights of LGBTQ people, women and others who might be adversely affected by the covenant."

B.C. Law Society president Ken Walker said in a release that the ruling is important to the public and the legal profession but that the society needs to review the decision before deciding to appeal.

In December 2014, the B.C. government revoked its original approval for the proposed law school based on uncertainty over the law society's willingness to grant accreditation.

"Trinity Western University has the option to resubmit its request to the Ministry of Advanced Education once the legal issues are resolved," said Minister Andrew Wilkinson in a statement.

The Association for Reformed Political Action, an intervener in the case, applauded the ruling.

"This decision corrects the false premise that members of Christian communities are somehow less suitable for public engagement in an increasingly secular society," said the group's Canadian legal counsel Andre Schutten.

"It affirms that the door to Canada's public square is still open for Christians, even as society is abandoning its Christian principles," Schutten said in a statement.

Kendra Milne of the women's legal advocacy group West Coast LEAF said she was disappointed the decision hinged on procedural grounds instead of engaging with the human-rights issues at stake in the case.

The proposed school is being challenged in other Canadian provinces by law societies that want to prevent accrediting the school's graduates because of the marriage policy.

Trinity Western launched legal challenges against law societies in Ontario and Nova Scotia after both opposed granting accreditation.

In January of this year, the Nova Scotia law society's action was struck down, while Ontario Divisional Court upheld its society's decision in July. Both rulings are being appealed.

The Federation of Law Societies of Canada, along with Alberta and Saskatchewan's bar associations, have all approved accreditation, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan have put decisions on hold. THE CANADIAN PRESS

BACKGROUND

School's launch delayed

Trinity's law school was originally slated to open in the fall of 2016 but executive director Earl Phillips said earlier that classes would be delayed by at least two years.

Spokeswoman Amy Robertson said the law school would not open its doors before all barriers to its graduates had been removed. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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RESEARCH

Oral history can help avalanche safety

Tapping into knowledge passed down between generations of mountain guides is just one of the novel ways that a British Columbia researcher hopes to improve winter safety in Canada's backcountry.

Simon Fraser University has appointed assistant Prof. Pascal Haegeli, of its environment faculty, to the newly created position of research chair in avalanche risk management.

Haegeli has been awarded about $1 million over the next five years to conduct avalanche-related research with industry and academic partners. Collaborators include Canadian Pacific Railway, Helicat Canada and the Canadian Avalanche Association.

Avalanche research has traditionally focused on terrain monitoring and snow conditions but new studies show psychology and decision-making play a much larger role in risk management.

"In about 90 per cent of the fatal avalanche accidents it's actually the victim or somebody in the group of the victim triggering the avalanche," Haegeli said.

Haegeli is overseeing research involving professional helicat tour leaders and tracking where and when they travel in the backcountry based on oral knowledge they've gleaned from previous generations of guides.

"Surprisingly very little research has looked at that expertise," said Haegeli, an avid backcountry skier. "It's very valuable expertise and we would like to pass that on to recreationists."

The goal is to create a tool for backcountry enthusiasts to better assess what kind of terrain is acceptable under different conditions.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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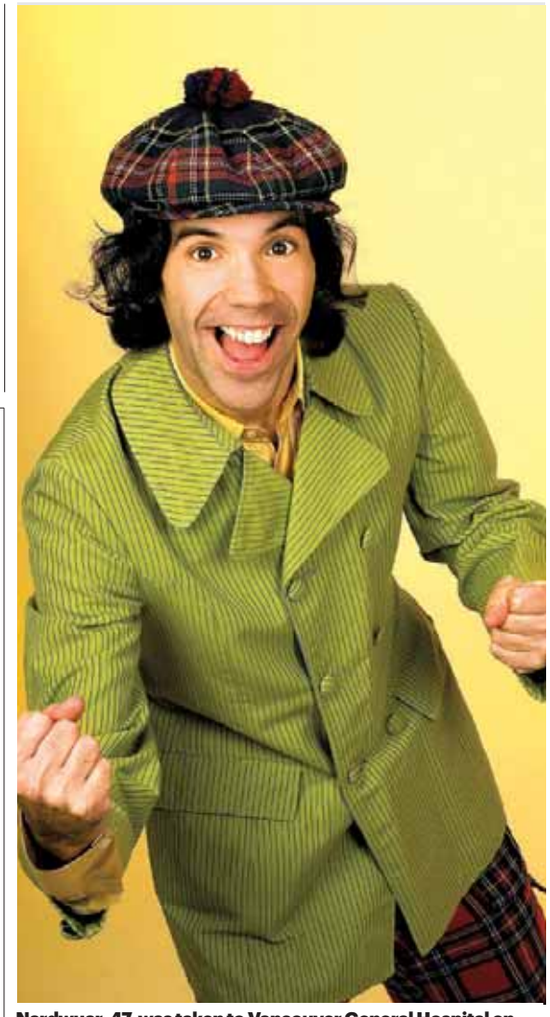

Nardwuar, 47, was taken to Vancouver General Hospital on Saturday night after suffering a stroke. FACEBOOK

Nardwuar recovering from stroke

ENTERTAINMENT

Eccentric celebrity interviewer in hospital

Nardwuar the Human Serviette was rushed to Vancouver General Hospital over the weekend after suffering a stroke.

The tam-wearing Vancouver resident — known for his celebrity interviews and music with his band The Evaporators — was attending a party at the Astoria pub on East Hastings Street when it happened.

On Wednesday, a post on his Twitter account suggested he is recovering at VGH with "more to come."

Metro contacted Nardwuar, whose real name is John Ruskin, via email and received a quick response.

He'll have more information about his condition on Monday.

Meanwhile, many of Nardwuar's celebrity friends have taken to social media to wish him well.

Pharrell Williams tweeted, "Wishing you a speedy recovery. We need more of your inspiring colorful interviews," while Tegan and Sara wrote their own get well wish:

"We're thinking of you @nardwuar !!! Getting better soon xoxoxoxoxo."

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The United Way of the Lower Mainland expects to bring in about $26 million in donations this year. GETTY IMAGES

Goodwill rises with refugees

UNITED WAY

Organization aims to raise $500K on top of annual goal

Tereza Verenca
For Metro | Vancouver

The president and CEO of the United Way of the Lower Mainland expects a surge in donations as more Syrian refugees resettle across the region.

"I think once we see who they are, and you see the faces and their stories, people tend to respond to that more," said Michael McKnight.

The local United Way chapter, which works with 700 companies and 40,000 donors, is one of six in Canada that have ramped up its efforts to help with the Syrian resettlement effort. The organization hopes to raise an additional $500,000 on top of its annual campaign. That money will support agencies like the Burnaby Multicultural Society, MOSAIC and the Immigrant Services Society. So far, $45,000 has been raised, according to McKnight.

"Most of that money is from donors who have already given to the United Way," he added.

But even though the Syrian refugee crisis may compel more people to dig into their pockets, McKnight told Metro the organization's annual fundraising campaign is scheduled to bring in the same amount as last year, a little over $26 million.

"It's been fairly steady or flat for the last three years," he said.

McKnight said the plateau could be for a number of reasons, including the high cost of living and the decline of "big employers."

"We're losing more of those big employers than we're gaining, that's for sure," he added.

The fact that there are so many charities out there to choose from is another reason.

Across the country, Canadians gave $12.8 billion to charities or non-profits in 2013 (about $531 on average, up from $470 in 2010), according to Statistics Canada. In B.C., the donor rate was the lowest compared to its counterparts, at 78 per cent in 2013.

$704

Average annual donation B.C. residents gave to charities or non-profits in 2013.
STATISTICS CANADA

ENVIRONMENT

B.C. pledges to reduce vehicle emissions

British Columbia has joined a global alliance aiming to fill highways and city streets with zero-emission vehicles over the next 35 years — an initiative that could lower global vehicle emissions by 40 per cent.

Environment Minister Mary Polak signed an agreement in Paris at the United Nations climate talks Thursday, making B.C. the 14th member of the International Zero-Emission Vehicle Alliance.

B.C. joins Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, along with California and seven other states in pledging to ensure all new vehicles are zero-emissions models by 2050.

B.C.'s Energy Minister Bill Bennett said the province already has the largest public-charging network in Canada for electric vehicles at more than 1,000 outlets, but more can be done.

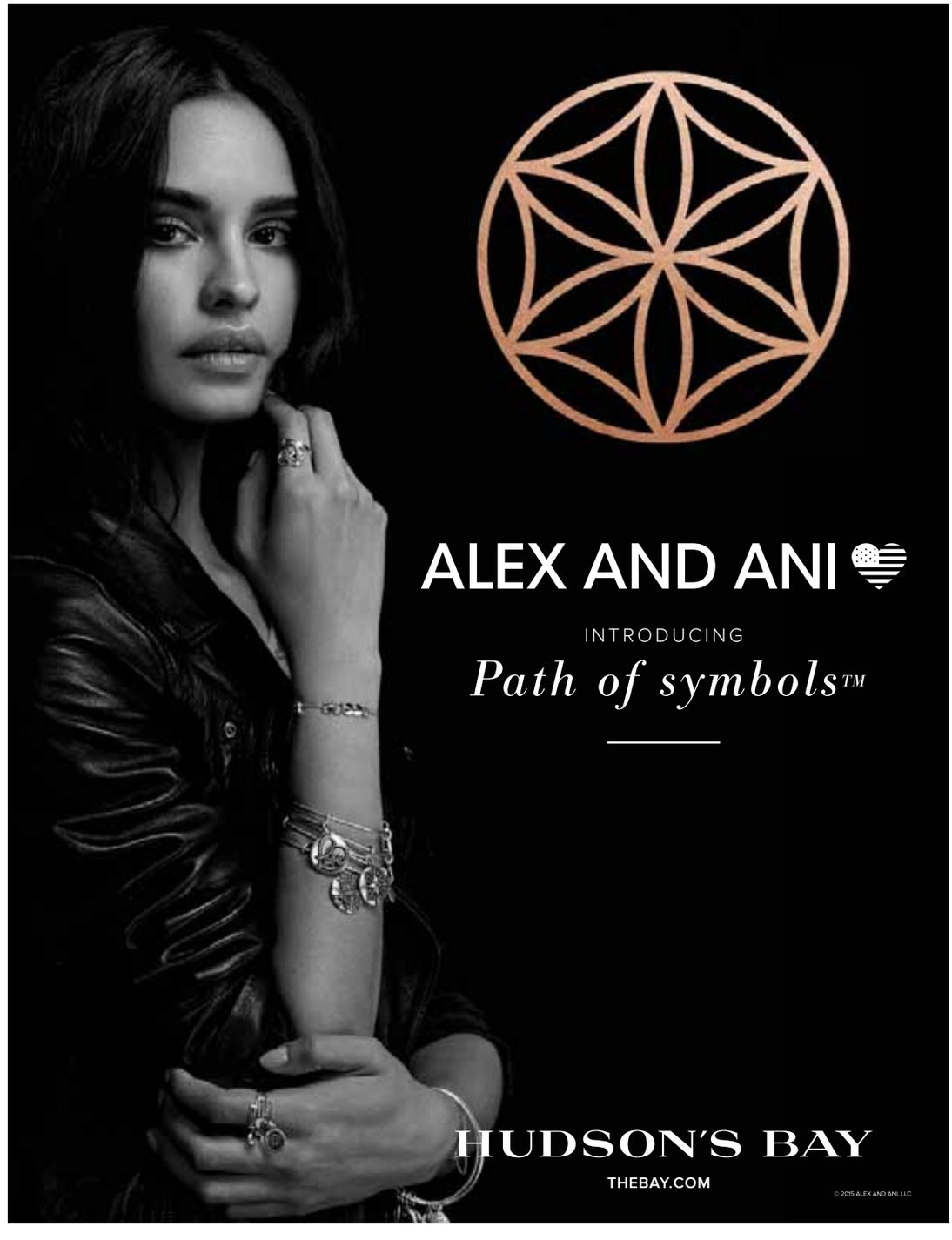
$80,000

Price of one of the cheapest Tesla electric vehicles on the market.

So far, there are less than 2,000 electric vehicles on the road in B.C., he said.

"How do you get more people doing it?" Bennett said. "You have to show them that they can save a lot of money on not having to buy fossil fuels and you have to make it easy for them to charge their vehicle."

B.C. introduced its Clean Energy Vehicle Program four years ago. It offers electric vehicle buyers point-of-sale incentives of more than $8,200. The program also invests in charging infrastructure improvements. THE CANADIAN PRESS



Autism Assistance dogs help clients navigate their daily life

ANIMALS

Guide helps Surrey boy with anxiety, meltdowns

Graeme s
For Metro | Vancouver

Zane is a good boy. But, a six-year-old Surrey boy living with the complications of autism spectrum disorder and seizures since age two, he isn't a fan of hospitals and dislikes getting sleeping electroencephalograms (EEGs).

For those, he has to be sedated. And, in the past, that's been, well, bad — for Zane, his mother Karolyn Masters and hospital staff.

"When the sedatives got into his system, they had the opposite effect," Masters says. "They made him more hyper. And he usually had to be velcroed to a spine board. It's hard for him. It's hard for everybody. It's heartbreaking."

On the last visit, though, things were different. Because with them, was Indy, Zane's Autism Assistance Dog Guide.

"Zane was really calm going into the hospital," Masters says. "They gave him the drug and he started getting drowsy — and that's usually when it suddenly spikes and he starts flipping around — and I got Indy right up on the bed with him. Indy put his head on him and Zane fell asleep. That, in itself, was amazing.

"It brought such comfort."

Indy, a two-year-old yellow lab, has been with the family for six months. He came from the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides (LFCDG), a national charity based in Ontario that provides dog guides to Canadians with disabilities.

Zane and his dog guide, Indy. GRAEME MCRANOR/FOR METRO

> **He's happy going into school every morning because he's got Indy.**
> Karolyn Masters

And, for Masters, it's been a life-changer.

"The payoff is huge," she says. "For Zane, it's almost like having a security blanket. And it gives me freedom. He has less meltdowns in public. We can go to the mall, we can go for a walk and I'm not scared my child is going to take off."

Ian Ashworth, director of program development at LFCDG, says bolting is common for children on the autism spectrum because they have no concept of danger.

"One of the big jobs we train the dogs to do is to be an anchor," he says. "So the child will wear a belt and that is attached to the dog's harness, and if the child goes to run off, the parent or caregiver just tells the dog to stay, and it doesn't let the child go."

For a single mom like Masters, that's one less worry.

"I've had to leave Zane's little sister in the middle of a big field because he bolted through the townhouses and across the street," she says. "It was scary. And the fact that I had to leave my little three-year-old by herself — safety was the biggest reason for us to get Indy.

"I've only got two hands."

The dogs also help with anxiety, meltdowns and excessive stimulation, says Ashworth. "Shopping malls or supermarkets — a lot of parents never go out with kids in those sorts of places — and the dogs really help in those scenarios by being their best friend, being their companion.

"If the child is starting to feel anxious, the parent can say, 'OK, let's just stay here for a minute and give your dog a nice big hug. He's not going to let you come to any harm.' A lot of children get great comfort in that. As do the parents and caregivers. A lot of parents tell us they've been able to go places they never would have gone with their child previously."

The dog guides aren't cheap. According to Jenny Gladish, communications manager at LFCDG, the cost of breeding, training and matching one dog is approximately $25,000. But none of that cost is passed on to the client.

"As a charity, we rely on the generosity of individuals, businesses, foundations, Lions clubs, and fundraising events to cover these costs," she says. "The client's travel and accommodation, and the trainer's time and expertise are included in this total cost."

Gladish says that, depending on the program, a client spends between 10 and 26 days learning to work with their dog under the guidance of the trainers.

"In the case of the Autism Assistance program, the parent is the official handler of the dog, meaning they provide the commands, so the parent attends the training to learn how to work with the dog as a valuable support for their son or daughter. At the training centre, clients bond with their dog, learn how to care for it, and learn how to be strong, capable handlers. "They practise in the situations they will encounter in day-to-day life."

"Just seeing the difference for Zane," says Masters, "the fact that he's happy going into school every morning because he's got Indy. He's just happy."

Indy, it seems, is a good boy too.

MORE INFO

For more information on Autism Assistance and other Dog Guide Programs, visit DogGuides.com.

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Aunt Leah's tree lots helping youth aging out of foster care

CHARITY

Young woman aided by the organization is giving back

Tereza Verenca
For Metro

Stacii Snowden, 19, came to Aunt Leah's Place at the age of 15. Today, she's giving back to the charity that has helped her so much over the years. TEREZA VERENCA/FOR METRO

Stacii Snowdon knows all too well why buying a Christmas tree from an Aunt Leah's lot goes a long way.

The Surrey resident came to Aunt Leah's Place — a charity that supports foster children and young mothers at risk of losing custody — at the age of 15. At the time, she had bounced around between seven different foster homes, moving as far away as Calgary. Sometimes she didn't even know why she was leaving.

Bad experience

The first foster family to take her in at the age of six wasn't a very nice one, according to Snowdon, who recalled being locked out in the dead of winter with no shoes or jacket.

When she found herself back in Surrey years later, with another foster family wanting to adopt her, Snowdon went to her social worker to ask how she could gain more independence and live on her own. She was encouraged to visit Aunt Leah's Place, where she'd eventually gain multiple certificates — like FoodSafe and first aid — and move into an Aunt Leah's suite, made possible through the charity's support link program. It provides teens with a fully furnished basement suite and a supportive landlord, in addition to pre-employment and essential skills training in everything from banking and taxes to personal health and well-being.

> **There are so many things that Aunt Leah's has helped me with that honestly, without them, I'd be lost.** Stacii Snowdon

"There are so many things that Aunt Leah's has helped me with that honestly, without them, I'd be lost," Snowdon said. "I'd have no idea where to start."

Giving back

Earlier this year, Snowdon moved out of her basement suite and into a fully independent apartment with her boyfriend and dog. She works full-time as a receptionist and part-time for Aunt Leah's tree lot in Burnaby.

"If I can come back to Aunt Leah's and try to help somebody else that may have had a bad experience, maybe be able to help their future, at least even be a friend, anything I can do to make a difference is a bonus," she said.

At the moment, Snowdon is saving up for school in hopes of one day becoming a daycare manager, having always loved kids, especially babysitting.

"It kind of brings back a piece of the childhood I felt I was missing," she added.

Services needed

Charities like Aunt Leah's Place, which has been operating in the Lower Mainland for 27 years now, are always needed, according to program director Sarah Stewart, who said many of the foster kids who "age out" of the system usually fall into poverty.

"The issue facing foster children when they age out is they have no room to make a mistake. If they make mistakes, the consequences are dire for them," she said, adding the foster-care system has failed many young people, including a Port Alberni teen who died in care earlier this month.

Stewart noted a lot of youth who come to Aunt Leah's usually return for support well into their 20s.

"What you've seen is housing costs increase, the requirements for education, but you haven't seen income increase, so what families are doing is supporting their children longer. The same thing is happening at Aunt Leah's."

Spruce or pine?

This year's fundraising goal for Aunt Leah's four tree lots has been pegged at $114,000, about 10 per cent of the charity's operating budget. On average, about 4,000 trees are sold every year. Prices, meanwhile, range by foot.

To make it all possible, there are 350 volunteers who lend a helping hand and another 10 youth who work the lots as part of Aunt Leah's retail training program.

RIGHT PATH

From helpless to helper

After Snowdon went through Aunt Leah's retail program a couple years ago, she was hired on a part-time basis. "Some people choose to go down the wrong path and others will choose to make the right decision and do what they can to take the right path, which is what I've tried to do with my life," she said.

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VANCOUVERING

THINK BIG. LIVE LOCAL

with icons by **Danielle Vallée** from the noun project

Ahmed Mohamed, second from right, holding his cousin Hassan, along with his nephew Abdi Haret Dagane, left, and mother Zeinab Elmi at his home in Surrey Tuesday. PHOTOS BY JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

Over the next few weeks, Metro will introduce readers to refugees who recently arrived in Vancouver. They will tell their stories of why they came here and what their aspirations are for the future. Meet Ahmed Mohamed. He arrived from Dadaab – the world's largest refugee camp in Kenya – on Sept. 25, 2013.

Mohamed adjusting to life in Vancouver

CAFÉ POLITICS **REFUGEE**

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Like many typical 20-somethings, Ahmed Mohamed plays soccer with his friends from school on Monday nights, works as a security guard to pay the bills when he's not studying and is keen to show off photos of his summer wedding to his longtime love, Asha.

But rewind a few years, and Mohamed's life would be unimaginable to most Metro Vancouverites. He spent 22 years — his entire childhood, adolescence and teenage life — living in Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, before moving to Vancouver as a refugee on Sept. 25, 2013.

Metro met Mohamed, who wore a cuff beaded with a Canadian flag, at his Surrey home where he now lives with his mother, nephew and cousins.

He's originally from rural Somalia, but his family fled to Kenya when the civil war intensified in the early 1990s. He was about three. (He laughs when disclosing he's not entirely sure how old he is due to a lack of documents.)

"When they saw the fighting moving in, they tried to escape with their lives," he said of his parents. His father was separated from them, and did not make it to the refugee camp.

Life was difficult in the camp, with scorching temperatures up to 48 C, not much to eat and limited health care. But Mohamed studied, got a job as a medical assistant at a hospital and was eventually promoted to auxiliary nurse.

Still, it was hard to get around in Kenya where refugees are not able to get identification and don't have legal status. Many of his friends decided to return to Somalia; most boomeranged back to camp when they witnessed the violence in their home country.

Mohamed wanted to join his friends, but had put his name on the United Nations Refugee Agency list so he stayed put. He checked it every day on his way home from work.

"In August 2012, I found my name there," he said. "I was very lucky."

He moved to Canada the following fall with his now 14-year-old nephew (he is the boy's legal guardian). In another stroke of luck, his mother was accepted to Canada just seven months later.

Adjusting to Vancouver was a challenge. A Somali woman helped him find a home and he quickly enrolled to upgrade his English and math skills. He moved to Edmonton for a brief stint, as friends from Dadaab have formed a community there, but he came back to Vancouver for his family.

At first he studied Monday to Friday at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and worked the graveyard shifts for a security company Friday through Sunday. He hopes to become a practical nurse — a job he likes, finds professional and is in high demand.

Last summer, he returned to Africa to marry his girlfriend, whom he met through playing soccer with her brother in Dadaab. They're in a long-distance relationship, but he hopes she will get permission to relocate to Canada in the New Year.

He grapples with the idea of nationality.

"You're a very young kid. We don't choose to be a refugee," he said. "I can't say I'm a Somali, I can't say I'm a Kenyan … I feel like a Canadian."

Ahmed Mohamed holds photos of himself and his wife Asha, from their wedding this past summer in Africa.

VANCOUVER TRENDING

THE ENCHANTING WORLD OF TINY BOOKS

Amy Logan
For Metro | Vancouver

Kim Koch, co-proprietor of The Paper Hound Bookshop (344 W Pender St.), holds a tiny, leather-bound book of poetry up to the light, revealing its embossed geometric patterns and marbled frontispiece.

The store yields many treasures, including a selection of very small books, ranging from avant garde 1960's Czech versions of Rimbaud and Sappho to a very short story printed on a matchbook, displayed in one of Koch's ingenious DIY paper clip book stands.

The smallest book in the store is a rare and valuable accordion-style miniature with intricate cursive and beautifully detailed illustrations by Charles Van Sandwyk. In fact, it is so small that it is tucked into a dollhouse-sized bookshelf, alongside Koch's own tiny, handmade decorative books, so it won't get lost.

The charm of miniature books is catching on in Vancouver. As Koch points

FOOD NOTES **BEAUCOUP BAKERY**

Cookies going local

Erin Ireland
Metro | Vancouver

A few years ago, on a hunt for Vancouver's "best cookie", two sweet-toothed friends and I rounded up 35 promising contenders.

After a full sampling, only one earned the elusive perfect score: Beaucoup Bakery's Salted Chocolate Rosemary Cookie (runner-up: Cadeaux's White Chocolate Orange Cookie earning 29.5/30).

Beaucoup's owner and Paris-trained pastry chef, Jackie Kai Ellis, has added two new creations to her cookie menu — Browned Butter & Kinako Shortbread and Toasted Buckwheat Chocolate Chip - both $2.25—- and they're as insanely delicious, perfectly executed and unique as her other winning recipes.

The former, my favourite, was inspired by kinako-covered Asian Mochi desserts. (Kinako is a roasted soybean powder).

"It sounds strange, but the nutty, savoury notes create an umami-sweet shortbread with an inexplicably addictive quality," says Ellis.

Her Buckwheat Cookie is chewy and studded with Valrhona chocolate.

Both recipes contain the perfect balance of sweet and saltiness thanks to Ellis' countless rounds of recipe revisions.

Go get some!

They're guaranteed to please the toughest cookie connoisseurs at your holiday parties this season.

A selection of cookies from Beaucoup Bakery. ERIN IRELAND/METRO

SEA TO SKY **LIVING ON THE EDGE**

Wanna spoon?

Metro's Cam Tucker tries his luck at virtual bobsledding at the Richmond Olympic Experience.

Reporter Cam Tucker tries out the ski-jump simulator at the Richmond Olympic Experience. PHOTOS BY JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

The goal scoring challenge tests for accuracy and ability to score on a high tech sensor net.

Tucker watches his broadcast of an Olympic event with Aran Kay, Program Manager, Marketing & Communications.

Artifact displays are paired with interactive touch screens to relive iconic moments in the history of the games.

Cam Tucker
Metro | Vancouver

With the push of a button, the surface beneath the seat begins to vibrate. Then it begins to shift side to side. There's no going back now.

Up ahead lies that first right turn. With both hands firmly grasping the individual steering handles, a quick reminder shoots through my brain: Pull the right handle … now!

Clunk!

Into the wall I go, unable to straighten out this contraption at the exit of the turn as it maneuvers down the chute of digitalized ice on screen in front.

My dreams of gold fade to dust. Maybe this isn't for me.

Thankfully, I'm not strapped inside a real bobsled zipping down the speedy ice of the Whistler Sliding Centre.

This is, however, a bobsleigh simulation, one of the many interactive exhibits at The ROX (Richmond Olympic Experience), the first North American member of the IOC Olympic Museums Network.

The museum is brand new to the Richmond Olympic Oval. It opened Nov. 21 to residents of Richmond and then a week later to the general public.

It includes exhibits that test the eyes and the mind — reaction timing exercises — as well as athleticism with activities like long jump, and soccer and hockey goal scoring challenges.

An educational component provides a history of the modern Olympic movement, as well as anecdotes, athletes, nations, torches and medals that have shaped it throughout the decades.

Even some of the most epic sports broadcasts have come during the Olympics, such as Chris Cuthbert's 'Golden Goal' call when Sidney Crosby scored for Canada in 2010, or Don Wittman describing Donovan Bailey's burst to the finish line in 100-metre final in 1996.

The ROX even has a television broadcast simulator, where the general public can try announcing some iconic sporting moments.

(My apologies to Usain Bolt for butchering his win in the 200-metre final at the 2008 Olympics.)

Sports broadcasting might not be up my alley.

But maybe, just maybe, with a little more practice I'll be able to drive a simulated bobsled without bumping the wall out of the first turn.

out, there's something satisfying about a book that fits in your palm. Stores like The Regional Assembly of Text (3934 Main St.) are also tapping into the desire for Lilliputian tomes.

The Little Book a Month Club for instance, offers subscribers one little handmade book a month, and the store's Lowercase Reading Room houses a miniature library, complete with a vast selection of teeny books and zines, from the 1970's to present day.

Owners Rebecca Dolan and Brandy Fedoruk are makers themselves, with a penchant for little books. Fedoruk says that she likes the simplicity, the fact that you can fairly easily produce a small, handmade book. The store is filled with whimsical examples of delicately wrought mini books, with titles like such as "Make the Most of Toast" and "172 Things to do to Increase your Level of Accomplishment."

As Koch points out, straightening a palm-sized copy of "Confidential Chats with Wives," people are enchanted by small things."

LEFT: A beautifully designed small book, complete with leather cord and tiny gold thread.
RIGHT: Kim Koch, proprietor of The Paper Hound.
PHOTOS BY AMY LOGAN/METRO

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The University of Northern British Columbia's senate is formally criticizing the process by which former Conservative MP James Moore was selected as chancellor. THE CANADIAN PRESS

UNBC opposed to Moore's selection

EDUCATION

Appointment as chancellor causes outcry from students

The University of Northern British Columbia's senate is formally opposing the process by which former Conservative cabinet minister James Moore was selected as chancellor.

Members voted after a lengthy debate Wednesday to ask UNBC president Daniel Weeks to inform the school's board of governors that it didn't sufficiently consult with the senate on Moore's appointment.

The appointment has caused an outcry among some faculty and students who say Moore's previous position in former prime minister Stephen Harper's government clashes with the university's values.

The board is required by the University Act to consult with the senate before appointing a chancellor, but the legislation does not spell out exactly what the process must entail.

Student senator Angela Kehler said the only consultation that took place was an in-camera meeting in October, shortly before the board announced on Nov. 26 that Moore had been chosen.

"As far as following the letter of the legislation, we were notified ahead of time," she said. "We just felt that it wasn't meaningful consultation. We didn't have enough time to consider before a recommendation went to the board."

The senate is made up of about 45 faculty members and students and handles academic decisions, while the board controls financial affairs.

Each senator was given an opportunity to speak during Wednesday's meeting, which was so packed that 60 people were shuttled into an overflow room, and it stretched on for about two hours past the allotted time, Kehler said.

"It's been a bit tense around school lately, but I think everyone having the opportunity to be heard ... Not that the issue was solved, but it kind of defused the situation a little bit."

> **It wasn't meaningful consultation. We didn't have enough time to consider before a recommendation went to the board.**
> Angela Kehler, student senator

At the end of the meeting, student representative David Clarkson entered the motion to have Weeks notify the board of its failure to consult. A majority of senators carried the motion though it was not unanimous, Kehler said.

The political science and environmental studies student said she was "very disappointed" by Moore's selection and would refuse to accept a degree from him if he hands them out at her convocation in the spring.

She urged the university's leadership to respond and address the concerns of the community.

"And James Moore himself, I can't imagine being in his position and still wanting to come into this role, considering the uproar around it."

Moore and board chairman Ryan Matheson did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The board has previously said that while it respects the discussion, it will not reverse its decision and Moore will be sworn in as the sixth chancellor in May.

The former industry minister announced in June that he would not seek re-election for family reasons, but he continued to attend Conservative campaign events leading up to the October election.

Critics have pointed to the Harper government's environmental record and muzzling of federal scientists as inconsistent with the values of UNBC, which calls itself "Canada's Green University."

But Moore, a graduate of the institution, has said he's honoured to be named chancellor and wants to work with everyone in the community to build on UNBC's successes.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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NOBEL PRIZE NATIONAL TREASURE The 2015 Nobel physics laureate professor Arthur B. McDonald (left) of Canada receives his award from King Carl Gustaf of Sweden during the 2015 Nobel prize award ceremony in Stockholm Concert Hall on Dec. 10. AFP/TT NEWS AGENCY/JONAS EKSTROMER/SWEDEN OUTJONAS EKSTROMER/GETTY IMAGE

National child-care costs

FAMILY SERVICES

Toronto parents pay the most, Quebec the least: Report

A new report says child-care costs have increased across the country, but some regions are feeling the pinch much more than most.

The study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives tracks the price of child care across 27 Canadian cities and three age groups — infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Child-care fees were highest in Toronto across the board, with parents facing median costs of more than a thousand dollars regardless of what age group their children fall in. Quebec marks the other end of the spectrum, where government policies have capped child-care fees and set the median cost at $174 a month across all age groups.

The study also found that space in regulated child-care facilities was hard to come by in every city and lengthy waiting lists were common.

The report by the CCPA — a think-tank that describes itself as a "progressive voice" in public policy debates — says the numbers suggest the need for all levels of government to get involved and invest in a more affordable child-care system nationwide.

Senior economist and report co-author David Macdonald said the variation among regions is both striking and concerning.

> **It's very much an accident of birth as to whether they can find affordable child care or not.**
> David Macdonald

"It's very much an accident of birth as to whether they can find affordable child care or not," Macdonald said in a telephone interview. "One of the starkest differences is in Ottawa ... You pay five times more for the same pre-school space one kilometre away in Gatineau compared to in Ottawa." Cost variations are not always so starkly illustrated, but the centre's report suggests that fees cover a broad spectrum across the country.

Median costs for infant care in Toronto, which equal $1,736 a month, are noticeably higher than they are in second-place Newfoundland and Labrador which still charges $1,400.

Variations also exist among cities that place limits on the prices parents must pay. Quebec is not alone in capping child-care costs for families, as similar measures exist in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island.

"It's a labour-intensive industry," Mercer said. "We can't automate it and reap those efficiencies. That is at the heart of the whole problem." THE CANADIAN PRESS

ISIL

Cyberattack on planes unlikely: Analysts

The prospect of a terrorist cyberattack on an airplane struck federal intelligence analysts as more pie-in-the-sky than a real possibility, newly released documents show.

The modern airliner's reliance on digital flight-control systems make some believe planes are vulnerable to malware that could be uploaded either online or through a direct connection, notes an assessment by Transport Canada's security intelligence assessment branch.

Although there are no confirmed cases of malware being used to hijack an aircraft's flight systems, it is "theoretically possible to do so," says the November 2014 assessment, recently obtained under the Access to Information Act.

"Changing flight control settings at critical times (landing or takeoff) could be catastrophic," the note allowed, but added: "The likelihood of such an event is assessed as very low."

There were suggestions that a 2010 Spanair crash could have been caused by a cyberattack because the plane's flaps and wing slats were in the wrong position, but this had not been communicated electronically to the flight crew, the analysts pointed out.

"Investigators were unable to determine if malware was the cause of the system fault."

British researchers were working to limit the effects of a possible attack by adding software that recognizes a malicious bug and routes around it, Transport Canada added.

The issue emerged again in January when messages posted on a forum related to the extremist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) suggested a virtual attack on western aviation. Hacking air-traffic control computers and jamming communications with aircraft could trigger hundreds or even thousands of accidents, one poster commented.

Tampering with the computers "would be like a nuclear bomb exploded in the centre of the White House," the individual wrote.

A three-page Transport Canada assessment, parts of which remain secret, played down the online boasts, saying "there was no mention of how to cause such a shutdown or what was required to do so." THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTHER AVENUE

Low risk of hacking via entertainment console
Transport Canada had also expressed skepticism about another potential vulnerability cited by experts — infiltration of a plane's satellite communication system (SATCOM) through the in-flight entertainment console. THE CANADIAN PRESS

LEGISLATION

Privacy watchdog urges 'open debate'

The privacy watchdog is urging the Liberal government to engage in open debate on national-security legislation as Justin Trudeau's cabinet reviews the controversial anti-terrorism law known as Bill C-51.

Privacy commissioner Daniel Therrien expressed hope Thursday the new government would follow through on its commitment to consult the public and specialists before revamping the bill, suggesting there was insufficient discussion on the Conservative legislation last spring.

"It would be very desirable to have a more complete and exhaustive debate on the issues before legislation is adopted," Therrien said after tabling his annual report.

Therrien railed against C-51 last March, saying the bill's scope was excessive and put personal information at risk.

The legislation gave the Canadian Security Intelligence Service the explicit power to disrupt terror plots, made it easier to limit the movements of a suspect, expanded no-fly list powers and cracked down on terrorist propaganda.

It also alarmed Therrien by removing many barriers to sharing security-related information. Therrien said the bill could make available all federally held data about someone of interest to as many as 17 government departments and agencies. THE CANADIAN PRESS

WORLD VISION

Kids greet new friends in video

"Welcome to Canada!"

That's the message Canadian children are sending Syrian refugees coming into the country this week in a heartwarming video released by World Vision.

"There's something so overwhelming and touching in seeing how kids respond to the idea of people being forced to flee their country," said Hugh Brewster, national manager for Canadian programs at World Vision.

In several languages, the children welcome refugees with messages of friendship and advice for life in their newfound Canadian home.

"Everyone likes Canada because we have all four seasons," adds one boy, posing in front of a hockey net.

The welcome messages were collected via email, and World Vision put the video together in two days, Brewster said.

He said many children expressed that they felt their job was "to make them feel welcome, to ask how you can help, to sit next to them in the cafeteria, to invite them on the slide with you." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Children from across Canada welcome their new Syrian neighbours. YOUTUBE

Mazan Khabbaz, centre left, a refugee from Syria, is embraced by a well-wisher as he arrives with his family at Toronto's Pearson Airport, on Wednesday. As many as 163 more Syrians lined up at the Beirut airport Thursday to board a military plane that would bring them to Canada. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada welcomes first 163 Syrian newcomers

IMMIGRATION

Feds work with sponsors to bring in 25K refugees

With suitcases stacked on luggage carts and blue bags full of info from government agencies on top, 163 Syrians lined up at the Beirut airport Thursday to begin the long journey to Canada.

They boarded a military plane as the vanguard of 25,000 refugees the Liberal government wants to bring to Canada by the end of February.

Photos taken by the Canadian Forces at the airport point showed a mix of men and women, teens and young children, some being offered teddy bears by Canadian officials.

The flight left Beirut to travel to Germany, where the military Airbus was to stop for refuelling and a change of crew before heading on to Toronto, landing after 11 p.m. local time.

All of the Syrians on board are being sponsored by private groups, many of whom had filed the paperwork months ago in order to bring in some of the estimated 4.3 million Syrians displaced by the ongoing civil war in that country.

But the sponsors will have to wait a while longer before they personally greet the new arrivals. The first Canadians the Syrians will meet upon landing at Toronto's Pearson airport will range from, perhaps, the prime minister, to a team of civil servants and border officers who will complete the final pieces of paperwork required.

From there, 116 will head to new homes in the Toronto area. Another four will go to Windsor, Ont. Sponsors in Kelowna, B.C., will welcome four, three will go to Coquitlam, B.C., and one to New Westminster, B.C. Twenty are bound for Calgary, Alta., and the final 15 to Edmonton, according to statistics released by the Immigration department.

> **We have great hopes for the success of this group of people that are arriving and their families as they build their new (homes) here in Canada.**
>
> Arif Virani

A second flight is set to arrive in Montreal on Saturday.

"We have great hopes for the success of this group of people that are arriving and their families as they build their new (homes) here in Canada," said Arif Virani, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of immigration.

While Syrian refugees have been arriving with some regularity since the Liberals were sworn into office on Nov. 4, they've arrived on commercial flights. Thursday sees the first government aircraft return from a deployment specific to a program that began as a Liberal promise months ago.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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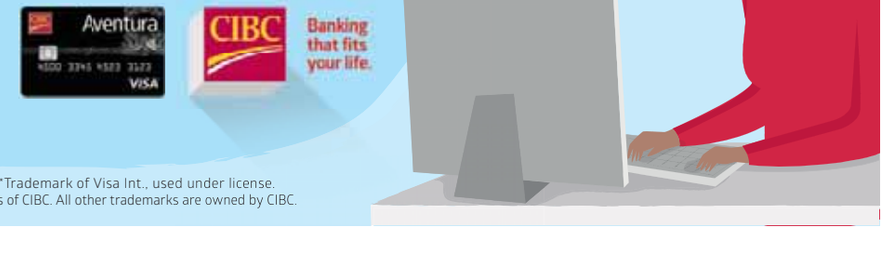

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Israeli officials seize dolls at Haifa Port

ISRAEL

Considered incitement of hate: Officials

About 4,000 dolls — wearing traditional Palestinian scarves and holding cloth rocks — were seized last week by Israeli authorities, who say they were destined for the West Bank.

Ram Alfia, of the Israel Tax Authority in Jerusalem, which oversees customs, said the dolls were discovered at the Haifa port. They were in two containers from the United Arab Emirates that were supposed to be carrying carpets, clothing and plastic products.

The dolls wore light brown pants and white T-shirts. The bottoms of the checkered scarves, known as kaffiyehs, were red, green, white and black, the colours of the Palestinian flag. In one raised arm, each plush toy held a small grey rock.

Two Arabic phrases — roughly translated as "Jerusalem for us" and "Jerusalem, here we come" — were written on the kaffiyehs.

Alfia said it was not immediately known for whom the dolls were intended. The dolls were not declared, Alfia said, but would not have been allowed to continue on their journey regardless because they were considered an incitement of hate.

In a video statement, Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely said the dolls are "being used to poison the minds of the young children in the Palestinian Authority."

In the latest surge of violence this fall, at least 109 Palestinians and 19 Israelis have been killed.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Some of the 4,000 dolls seized on a shipment bound for Palestinian stores. AFP PHOTO/HO/HAIFA CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES

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IRAQ

ISIL tactic traps its own fighters

Besieged ISIL militants in the Iraqi city of Ramadi destroyed a lock on the Euphrates River that served as a bridge as government forces on Thursday sought to cement their gains around the militant-held city west of Baghdad.

Since Iraq's military launched its push on Ramadi earlier this month, the militants have destroyed all other bridges leading into the city, both on the Euphrates and its tributary, the Warar River.

Iraqi Maj Gen. Ismail al-Mahlawi, the head of military operations in the western Anbar province, said the lock destroyed Thursday was the last remaining bridge from the city centre to the northwest.

The locks' destruction leaves some 300 ISIL fighters trapped in the centre of the city, he added. Col. Steven Warren, the spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Baghdad, said the destruction of the bridge may prove to be a tactical mistake for ISIL.

"What they've also done now is they've really cut themselves off," he said.

Muhannad Haimour, the spokesman for the Anbar governor's office, said he received reports from residents still inside Ramadi that IS was also destroying buildings and radio towers.

"We've seen this before; they tend to blow up not just bridges, but a lot of infrastructure inside the city," Haimour said.

Haimour added that according to reports he received, about two months ago ISIL fighters began moving their families out of Ramadi and toward the town of Hit northwest of Ramadi. That, he said is when he believes the tide began to turn against the ISIL group in the Anbar provincial capital.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iraqi security forces take combat positions on the front line in Ramadi, capital of Iraq's Anbar province. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Human smugglers face up to 35 years in prison

Turkey's state-run news agency says prosecutors are seeking 35-year prison terms for two suspected human-smugglers held responsible for the drowning of Alan Kurdi, the 3-year-old Syrian migrant boywhose images helped focus the world's attention on the Syrian refugee crisis. The prosecutor's office accused the two Syrians of negligence and migrant trafficking. Alan, his brother and mother drowned on the way to the Greek island of Kos.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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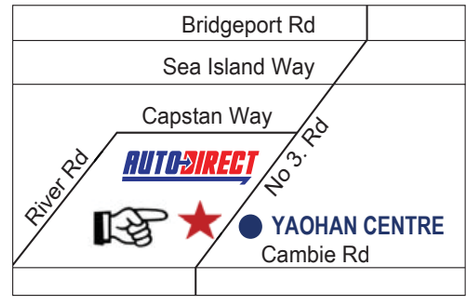

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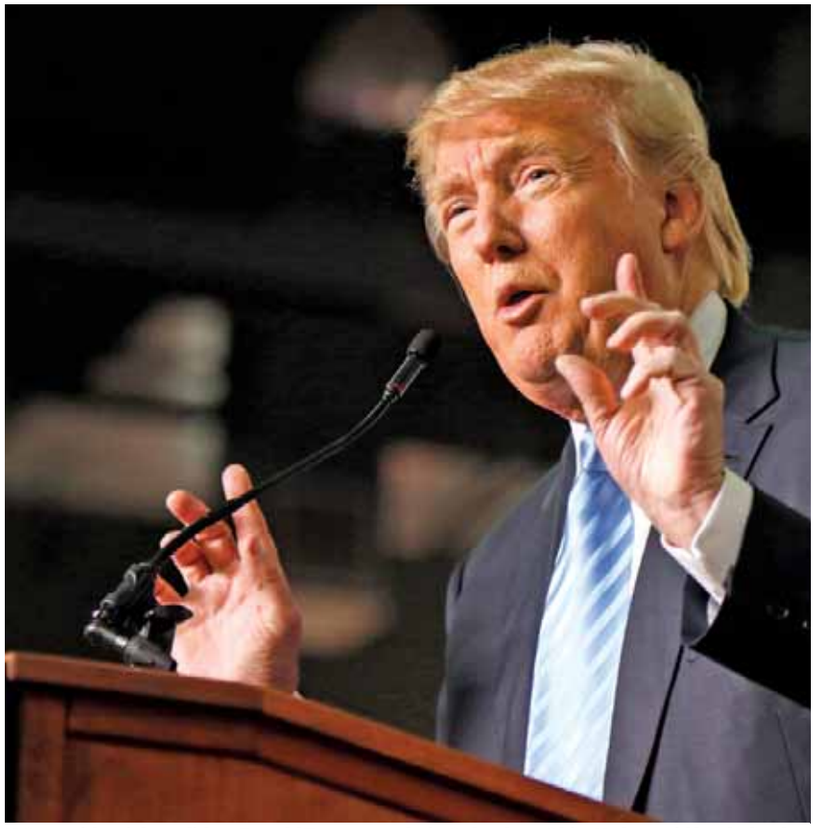

U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks in Columbus, Ohio. He has said he shelved a trip to Israel in order to not pressure President Benjamin Netanyahu. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Trump postpones journey to Israel

UNITED STATES

Candidate says he'll make trip 'after I become president'

Republican Donald Trump has scrapped a planned trip to Israel, saying he will reschedule "at a later date after I become President of the U.S."

Trump tweeted Thursday that he is postponing the trip, which had become problematic for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Viewed as a Republican Party supporter, Netanyahu's position became risky after Trump called for keeping Muslims from entering the U.S. and making controversial comments to a Jewish group.

Trump told Fox News there were many reasons he decided to hold off on a trip, among them that he didn't want to put Netanyahu in a bind.

"You know, he said, 'We have a meeting,' and he looks forward to the meeting and all of that," Trump said. "But I didn't want to put him under pressure, No. 1. I also did it because I'm in the midst of a very powerful campaign that's going very well and it was not that easy to do. So I would say lots of different reasons."

> **I'm in the midst of a very powerful campaign that's going very well.** Donald Trump

Trump has the Republican party in turmoil over his call for a temporary ban on Muslims entering the U.S. following last week's mass shooting by an Islamic militant couple that killed 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif.

Netanyahu's office had said in a statement issued Wednesday he rejects Trump's comments about Muslims but planned to move forward with the meeting with Trump.

The Republican presidential candidate, who has maintained a wide lead in most early polling, sparked criticism among many American Jews last week after speaking to a gathering of Jewish donors. He was booed after refusing to endorse Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel. The U.S., like most of the international community, refuses to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and says the city's status must be resolved in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Trump also made remarks some said promoted Jewish stereotypes. "I know why you're not going to support me: you're not going to support me because I don't want your money," Trump said.

He also said, "I'm a negotiator, like you folks."

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Ali speaks out for Islam

POLITICS

Boxing great backs religion after Trump's ban proposal

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali criticized Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States, calling on Muslims "to stand up to those who use Islam to advance their own personal agenda."

Ali, one of the most famous Muslims in the world, issued a statement saying, "True Muslims know that the ruthless violence of so-called Islamic Jihadists goes against the very tenets of our religion."

He added, "I believe that our political leaders should use their position to bring understanding about the religion of Islam and clarify that these misguided murderers have perverted people's views on what Islam really is."

Ali's statement Wednesday was directed at "presidential candidates proposing to ban Muslim immigration to the United States.

"They have alienated many from learning about Islam."

U.S. President Barack Obama, in an address to the nation Sunday, called on Americans to reject discrimination, saying, "Muslim Americans are our friends and our neighbours, our co-workers, our sports heroes."

> **Misguided murderers have perverted people's views on what Islam really is.**
> Muhammad Ali

On Twitter early Monday, Trump asked, "What sport is he talking about, and who?" — even though Trump has met Ali several times, and even received an award named after the former heavyweight champion in 2007.

Ali, 73, who was born Cassius Clay, converted to Islam and changed his name in 1964.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali is criticizing Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump's proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

UNITED STATES

Fears of backlash increase

A severed pig's head was left outside a mosque in Philadelphia. A Sikh temple in California was vandalized by someone who mistook it for a mosque and left graffiti that included a profane reference to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militant group.

Advocacy groups believe a spate of anti-Muslim incidents across the U.S. in recent weeks can be linked to last week's mass shooting in California and the inflammatory rhetoric of Donald Trump and other Republican presidential candidates. And they say Muslims are fearful the backlash could lead to further harassment and violence.

"The spike began with the Paris attacks and has intensified with what happened in San Bernardino," Ibrahim Hooper, lead spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said Wednesday. "I have never seen such fear and apprehension in the Muslim community, even after 9/11."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED STATES

Shelters for immigrant children planned

Federal officials plan to open three shelters in Texas and California to accommodate up to 1,400 unaccompanied immigrant children as the number of people crossing from Mexico into the United States continues to rise.

After a decline in crossings following last year's surge of children entering the United States, border crossings rose again this summer. In October and November, 10,588 unaccompanied children have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border, according to the federal Border Patrol. That's more than double the number for October and November last year.

The increase led the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to expand the number of beds it has for children, the agency said in a statement Thursday. The agency said it was acting "out of an abundance of caution."

The number of families crossing the border also has gone up significantly. Figures released last month for October indicated the number of family members crossing together tripled compared to October 2014, from about 2,100 to more than 6,000.

Two Texas facilities to take in children are the Sabine Creek Ranch in Rockwall County and the Lakeview Camp and Retreat Center in Ellis County. Both are located in rural areas just outside Dallas.

Rockwall County Judge David Sweet, the county's top administrator, said in an interview Thursday his county to take in 300 children, all from Central America.

"It goes without saying that we're very sensitive (to) the plight of unaccompanied children," Sweet said. But, he added, public safety "has to be my No. 1." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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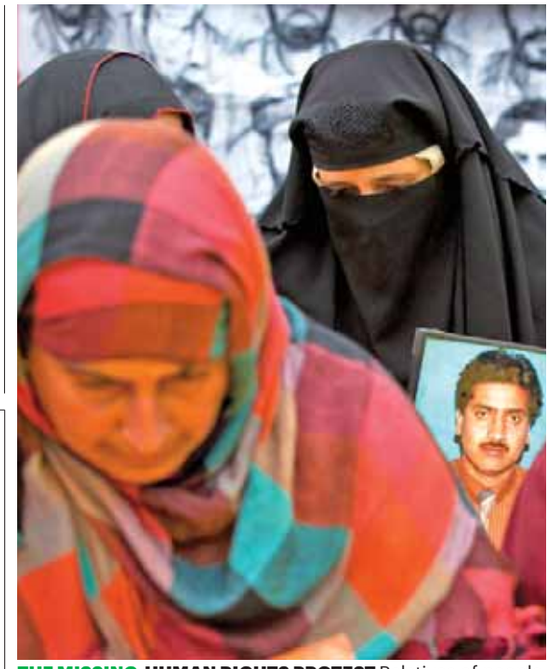

THE MISSING HUMAN RIGHTS PROTEST Relatives of people who have gone missing sit at a protest to mark International Human Rights Day in Srinagar, India, Thursday. According to Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), more than 8,000 are untraceable since the beginning of the Kashmir conflict in 1989, after being arrested by Indian security forces and other security agencies. DAR YASIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Saudi blogger imprisoned

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Canada and family aiming for his release

Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, who was sentenced to receive 1,000 lashes for his liberal writings, has started a hunger strike after being transferred to a remote prison, his wife has announced.

In a post on her Facebook page, Ensaf Haidar said that her husband's hopes of a pardon have been dashed because Shabbat Central Prison, where he was taken Thursday, is reserved for those prisoners who have received a final verdict.

"We are very alarmed at the prison administration decision to transfer my husband to the Shabbat Central and fear it may lead to the resumption of his flogging," wrote Haidar, who lives with the couple's three kids in Sherbrooke, Que.

"We hold the prison administration responsible for any harm that Raif may suffer."

Badawi's supporters have been pushing for a review of his case, buoyed by Quebec's offer of an immigration certificate in June and word from the Saudi supreme court that it was reviewing his case.

Ensaf Haidar, wife of blogger Raif Badawi.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Last month, Swiss Foreign Minister Yves Rossier announced that negotiations for Badawi's pardon were in the works.

Badawi, the founder of a Saudi liberal blog, was arrested in 2012 and sentenced to 1,000 lashes, 10 years in prison and a fine of more than $325,000 for insulting religious authorities. Badawi received the first 50 lashes on Jan. 9 in Jeddah, but his punishment has since been postponed indefinitely.

A collection of Badawi's writings, 1,000 Lashes, has been published in Quebec and in October, the European Union awarded him the prestigious Sakharov Prize for human rights.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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WAR CRIMES

Rwandan genocide suspect arrested

Interpol agents arrested a Rwandan with a $5 million bounty on his head who is among the most wanted for the 1994 genocide, officials said Thursday.

Ladislas Ntaganzwa was arrested in the eastern Congo city of Goma late Monday, according to John Bosco Siboyintore, the head of the Genocide Tracking Unit at Rwanda's Public Prosecution Authority and Rwandan Prosecutor General Richard Muhumuza.

Ntaganzwa is among the nine most-wanted fugitives in the 1994 Rwanda genocide which killed more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, Siboyintore said.

The UN's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda sought Ntaganzwa to answer charges related to participation in genocide and incitement to commit genocide. Ntaganzwa allegedly carried out these acts as mayor of Nyakizu. The ICTR closed its proceedings last week after nearly 20 years of pursuing and prosecuting genocide suspects and transferred Ntaganzwa's case to Rwanda.

Muhumuza said the country has started extradition proceedings for Ntaganzwa to stand trial in Rwanda.

$5M

There was a reward of up to $5 million for any information leading to Ntaganzwa's capture.

According to ICTR's indictment of Ntaganzwa, he is accused of substantially participating in the planning, preparation and execution of the massacre of over 20,000 Tutsis at Cyahinda Parish from around 14-18 April 1994.

On April 15, 1994, Ntaganzwa, armed with a gun, transported gendarmes in a vehicle while Hutu civilians and Burundian refugees he had incited earlier arrived on foot and surrounded Cyahinda Parish to prevent the Tutsis from escaping, the indictment says. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Students protest photo

Black students at a Pennsylvania university are protesting a picture of black students posted on social media with a caption comparing them to animals.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania President Michael Driscoll met with the students at the state-owned school. The Snapchat picture showed a group of black students inside the campus library with the caption "monkeys stay in groups."

About 50 students marched across campus Wednesday to demand answers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Five Serbian war-crimes suspects arrested

The Bosnian Serb regional government says it has stopped all co-operation with the state court, prosecution office and police because they ordered or carried out the arrest of five Serb war crimes suspects and raided a local police station in the Serb republic.

The five are suspected of having killed 27 Muslim Bosnian civilians and having expelled the rest of the Muslim population from the town during the 1992-95 war after torturing them and looting their homes.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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This photo shows Tangier Island, Va. The island is losing a battle to rising sea levels and sinking land mass. The bay has claimed almost everything, the result of the region's rising sea levels and sinking land and it's creeping ever closer to washing the whole place away. Researchers say the 500 or so residents of Tangier Island could be forced to move in 50 years, as rising seas claim their island at an alarming rate. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Sinking Tangier is 'ground zero': Expert

CLIMATE CHANGE

Chesapeake Bay villages could be gone in 50 years: Report

Islanders in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay could be among the first "climate change refugees" in the continental United States as rising seas claim their historic fishing village, a report released Thursday concludes.

The research published in the journal Scientific Reports says residents of steadily shrinking Tangier Island will have to abandon their fishing community in approximately 50 years.

As the UN climate talks continue an ocean away in Paris, "Tangier is kind of ground zero," said oceanographer David M. Schulte, lead author of the research.

The peer-reviewed research was funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has said millions in new infrastructure such as breakwaters could shield Tangier Island and extend its life.

Tangier's threatened existence is not news to islanders, who have seen their island and others nearby retreat through the decades.

"Climate change is upon us and that adaption to climate change is 'not optional.'
Excerpt from the report

Uppards Island was abandoned nearly a century ago, but the skeletal remains of those who once lived there are occasionally coughed up during storms, such as Hurricane Sandy.

Low-lying Tangier is particularly susceptible to climate change and rising seas and the sinking of the bay - called subsidence. The sinking is a remnant of the last ice age and glaciers north of the bay. As the ice melted, the land rebounded, while the bay began to sink.

Approximately 700 people live on Tangier, nearly half its peak population. Island watermen are prodigious fishermen, hauling in a disproportionate amount of the bay's signature crabs and oysters.

Islanders get around on golf carts and homes are clustered atop ridges to keep them beyond the reach of rising waters. Graves have had to be interred and remains moved to avoid being swamped.

Because of its isolation, many residents have retained over centuries the linguistic traces of the island's settlers, primarily from Cornwall along England's southwest coast. Jamestown settler Capt. John Smith is believed to be the first white man to set foot on the island more than 400 years ago.

By the researchers' calculations, only one-third of the island's land mass remains from what was there in 1850. At the current rate, one island near Tangier, called Goose, will be flooded by 2038. As for Tangier, it will be splintered into three low-lying uninhabitable marshes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

50

The report states the construction of breakwaters and other measures, at a cost of $30 million to $40 million, could extend Tangier's lifespan by perhaps another 50 years.

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INVESTMENTS

Many out of depth, poll finds

A new poll suggests that two-thirds of millennials are investing their money, but that most feel they don't have adequate knowledge for the task.

The poll done for CIBC found 67 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 reported having investments including stocks, GICs, bonds and mutual funds. But 82 per cent said they didn't know enough about investing.

The one-third of respondents who said they did not have any investments cited lack of financial knowledge and the fact that investing "intimidates" them as major reasons.

Not having any money to invest and other financial priorities were also cited as reasons for not investing.

Of those who do invest, 41 per cent said they don't get the returns they expect.

Sarah Widmeyer, head of wealth advisory services at CIBC, says while it's good to see millennials recognize the importance of investing, they need help.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Walmart steps into mobile payment war

TECHNOLOGY

Retailer going up against Apple, Google and Samsung

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, said it's launching its own mobile payment system that will allow shoppers to pay with any major credit or debit card or its own store gift card through its existing smartphone app at the cash register.

It started testing the new payment feature Thursday at its stores in the Bentonville, Arkansas area, where the retailer is based. It plans to launch the payment system called Walmart Pay in all 4,500-plus U.S. stores early next year.

It's part of Walmart's overall mobile strategy to making shopping easier and faster, but the launch is the latest salvo in the battle for mobile payments that's in the early stages. Walmart has moved into the field as Apple's one-year-old tap-and-pay system is being expanded to other merchants like Best Buy and KFC, and several months after Google launched the Android Pay mobile wallet app and Samsung came out with Samsung Pay. They're all trying to get a piece of what could be a very lucrative business, but none of them have cracked the market so far.

Walmart has begun testing its own mobile payment system that will allow shoppers to pay with any major credit or debit card or its own store gift card. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The move signals that Walmart believes it's best to build its own system. "We are creating a seamless shopping experience that includes payment," Neil Ashe, president and CEO of Walmart's global eCommerce, told reporters. "It's fast. It's simple, and it's a secure way for customers to use their smartphone."

Walmart executives said that after evaluating various mobile options, they found that they had different constraints, working only on certain devices or payment types. Apple Pay requires iPhones. But Google's own tap-and-pay services, Android Pay and Samsung's Samsung Pay require Android phones.

Walmart's move could be a blow to Merchant Customer Exchange, or MCX, set up a few years ago by a consortium of retailers and restaurants to create an industrywide mobile payment system. Walmart has been a key player. But Walmart executives told reporters they remain excited about the MCX pilot program for the payment system called "CurrentC."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

El Niño threatening Canada's maple output

A late spring caused Canada's maple syrup production to fall for the second consecutive year in 2015 — and warmer El Niño weather is threatening to put a dent in next spring's output as well.

The impact would hit Quebec, the world's dominant maple syrup producer, along with Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and syrup-producing American states like Vermont and New York.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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DEENA DOUARA KARIM: ON TRUMP'S DANGEROUS WORDS

I'm weary of trying to convince people of things. That Islamophobia is prevalent and experienced by people I love. Or that what's happening today has little to do with religion.

You know how I feel about Donald Trump.

I'm a Muslim and an American, and you know how I feel about Trump.

I sat in the newsroom as he made his comments about banning Muslims from coming into the U.S. Someone referenced Hitler, it was slotted for a news page (in Toronto, a brief) and we all went about our work.

Meanwhile, I stared at the screen. Is it naïve to continue to feel disbelief when every outrageous statement is only incrementally more horrid than the one before?

I'm weary of trying to convince people of things. That Islamophobia is prevalent and experienced by people I love. Or that what's happening today has little to do with religion.

Instead, I'll tell you how it feels to hear Trump — a front-running candidate to lead the world's most powerful country — say he wants a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." How it feels to hear supporters say "send them all back."

You know how I feel, but I hope you'll still hear me say it.

It feels like anger. Anger at the lies Trump knowingly spews that leave Muslims as casualties in very real ways,

Dark times. Donald Trump's message is designed to provoke, but it provokes pain for many who deserve better from America, Deena Douara Karim argues. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

at home and abroad. Anger at the blatantly false information that will shape how Americans — and Canadians, too — view their co-workers and their neighbours. "I watched thousands and thousands of people cheering," he says, of reactions to 9/11 in New Jersey — a claim supported by nothing and no one. Suggestions — a Muslim registry, ID cards — that push the boundaries of what can be thought and vocalized. And anger at the muted response. Calls here and there to remove his name from a building, to be sure. But visceral outrage? For words that so closely parallel Hitler for a population with still-living links? I have to turn to Facebook for that.

It feels like sadness. Like a friend, who was a refugee, hearing "ship them all back" from a Trump supporter. Would they send her family back, whatever the horror "back" represents? "I don't want them here," they say. "They need to go." Sadness because I suspect I have school friends who would now nod their heads, agreeing their families really would be safer this way. With sadness I recall the humour and generosity of Syrians I met years ago – the young hostel owners who shared their food, the man who talked about films as I bought cloth from him. Sad to hear them now compared to "rabid dogs," by another candidate, Ben Carson, and know they would have showered him with the same kindness.

It feels like fear. Not fear I'll be patching crescents onto my coats anytime soon, but I do fear for the soul of the country I grew up in. What are we capable of when Trump calls waterboarding "peanuts"? Fear that people selling "anti-jihad" rifles who distribute Qur'ans for target practice will move into the mainstream, acknowledged and accepted in this "anti-political-correctness" ethos.

It feels like worry. Like hearing friends select baby names based on their sounding not-too-Muslimy. Worry for how refugees — from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq — will be received and what future awaits them when many in the world's wealthiest nation see them as ticking time bombs.

It feels like bafflement. How the very people who accept thousands of casualties from guns will take all measures to brace against a single death by "Muslim." Gun-rights principles above all, but no principles that stand by people like me.

It feels like frustration. Hearing experts agree that inflammatory rhetoric leads to greater isolation and radicalization in dark and vulnerable corners at home, and emboldens groups like ISIL abroad, meaning that Trump and his compatriots help create the world they purport to combat. Frustration because high-profile comments give people permission to express their nastiest inclinations. Frustration with the lack of transparency around mass killings when they are perpetrated by Muslims — who always wind up dead, and who always inspire alternate stories, "conspiracy theories," difficult to ignore.

There is no need to reassure me Trump will not win the presidency, or that a registry system would never pass. It does not matter. Trump is no lone loon — he has support and admiration; has other candidates seething that he's captured the hate vote.

The statements that evoke these feelings are harmful, now. They have repercussions, now. And they change the America that I grew up in, now.

It feels like fear. Not fear I'll be patching crescents onto my coats anytime soon, but I do fear for the soul of the country I grew up in.

Deena Douara Karim is a journalist and photographer. She tweets at @Deena_Do.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
metroview

For a joyful New Year's prediction, just talk to Tomson Highway

Tomson Highway's aura is infectious. His grin. His self-described "spectacular joy."

"I have a mental condition that is worsening as I get older. It's called ridiculousness," he says right after we meet, looking thoroughly pleased. For the next 10 minutes every answer contains a punchline.

"Shall we disrobe?" he asks playfully, taking off his oversized track jacket. He wears square glasses and a black tuque that he pushes up over his ears as we talk.

The acclaimed playwright, novelist and pianist is in Toronto for a cabaret retrospective of his work, Songs In The Key of Cree, on Sunday. Highway, a classically trained pianist, has been writing songs for 14 years, the kind that, at a recent run in Saskatoon, garner standing ovations so great even "People in wheelchairs leaped from their wheelchairs!"

"Language is music," he says — one of his oft-repeated lines, and notes I've been laughing in 4/4 time.

Highway speaks Cree, French and English among others, and travels extensively "for the beautiful people" and the languages.

He's called himself a linguistic activist, and argues each language contains "a secret to the functioning of the human organism." Learning a new tongue offers insight, he says, and that chance to truly listen.

I ask him about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who won praise this week for his new attitude to indigenous Canadians.

"Yes, he's opening his mind and his heart, and he's listening," says Highway. Compared to Stephen Harper, who had a "heart of ice" and spoke only of the economy, Trudeau is "talking about human issues, issues that matter to humanity. That means there's room for change," he says.

And Highway sees Canada's Aboriginal Peoples on the precipice of great change. He believes pain and trauma are the birthplace of beauty and creativity. From manure, as he puts it, comes vegetation.

"I think we're on the verge of something extraordinary as native people. Collectively as a nation, we have suffered a certain kind of trauma, which brings us to the threshold of extraordinary achievement. That's what I'm here to help with, to help open to the door to extraordinary achievement, and I think it's going to be spectacular."

I tell him that's the best prediction for the new year I've ever heard.

Highway — who speaks far too quickly for note-taking — seems like he could philosophize like this forever, but nothing serious can ward off his humour. He makes a joke about flattery and flatulence as we shake hands goodbye.

"Every moment of every day should be an act of joy," he says. "I dance down the street."

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A whale of a tale... hold the fat

Chris Hemsworth isn't the only actor to change his weight for a role, but the practice can take its toll on the body. HANDOUT

IN THE HEART OF THE SEA

Hemsworth lost 33 pounds to play sailor

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

In the Heart of the Sea features less of Chris Hemsworth than we've seen on screen before. He's in virtually every scene, but for much of the film the usually bulked up Thor star is set adrift in a raft, starving and physically much less imposing than usual.

The movie is an old-fashioned whale of a tale. Literally.

Based on the true story said to have inspired Moby Dick, it's about whalers battling not only repeated assaults from the one whale who fought back, but also malnourishment and dehydration.

At sea for three months in tiny whaleboats the men are pushed to the edge of sanity, taking drastic steps to survive.

To convincingly play a starving sailor Hemsworth trimmed 33 pounds off his already toned 6'2 3/4" frame.

"My crazy diet would make you pass out from exhaustion," he said. At certain points he was eating just 500 or 600 calories — that's less than a combo lunch meal at most fast-food places — in the form of a boiled egg, two crackers and a celery stick a day.

Hemsworth and his underfed cast mates passed away the time with conversations "about our favourite foods and what we would eat when we finished the film."

The actor says losing that amount of weight isn't something he'd like to do again, but adds, "by those final sequences when we were supposed to be exhausted and emotional. We were feeling that way off screen too, so it helped."

Dramatic weight loss isn't new — actors have been yo-yo dieting for roles for years — but doctors say rapid body mass reduction can lead to malnutrition, maladies like gallstones and worse. In other words, as Christian Bale who dumped 60 pounds for his role in The Machinist says, "It ain't great for your health."

Still, actors take on dramatic diets to aid in their dramatic work. Anne Hathaway dropped 25 pounds by food deprivation and exercise to make Les Miserables while Matthew McConaughey survived eating only Diet Coke, egg whites and a piece of chicken a day to play AIDS patient Ron Woodroof in Dallas Buyers Club. According to The Playlist he stopped dieting when "people stopped asking if he was all right and started suggesting he seek help."

Just as common are actors who gain weight. Russell Crowe gained 63 pounds to play a CIA bigwig in Body of Lies, George Clooney gained 35 pounds for Syriana and Renee Zellweger gained 30 pounds for Bridget Jones's Diary, lost it, only to regain it for the sequel.

Jared Leto who lost 40 pounds to play Rayon in Dallas Buyer's Club, gained 67 pounds for the film Chapter 27 by drinking melted pints of chocolate Haagen Dazs ice cream mixed with olive oil and soy sauce "to get me bloated even more."

Why do actors alter their bodies? Some call it dedication while cynics suggest it's an easy Oscar. Physical transformations (plus acting talent) brought Robert DeNiro, Charlize Theron and McConaughey to the winner's circle.

But some actors have sworn off manipulating their weight. Jim Carrey turned down a role in the Three Stooges biopic that would have required him to gain 40 to 50 pounds and Tom Hanks blames gaining and losing weight for roles with him developing Type 2 diabetes.

"I've talked to a number of actors who have gained weight for roles and — just out of the sheer physical toll on one's knees and shoulders — no-one wants to do it again," he told the BBC.

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

In the Heart of the Sea ★★★
The Danish Girl ★★★
Carol ★★★★
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Chris Hemsworth and Charlotte Riley in the action adventure In the Heart of the Sea. CONTRIBUTED

Inside the heart of Chris Hemsworth

INTERVIEW

Actor talks fame, Thor and working with Ron Howard

Hosting Saturday Night Live earlier this year, Chris Hemsworth exaggerated his swift ascent in Hollywood: "If a jacked Australian with a perfect face can make it, anyone can," he said in a mock American Express ad.

Hemsworth, the 32-year-old Australian actor known the world over as Thor, appears as if perfectly chiseled out of movie star granite. But whatever his considerable natural gifts, Hemsworth has proven an interesting actor inclined to use his powerful screen presence in roles that both exalt it and upend it.

In In the Heart of the Sea, which opens Friday, he reteams with Ron Howard, who directed him in Rush, the 2013 movie that yielded Hemsworth's most confident starring performance as the Formula One driver James Hunt.

In Heart of the Sea, a recounting of the plight of the Essex (the cursed whaling ship that inspired Herman Melville's Moby-Dick), Hemsworth plays the swashbuckling first mate. Shipwrecked by a mammoth sperm whale, Hemsworth's heroic seaman is humbled, left a gaunt survivor.

It's the kind of duality that defines Hemsworth: a hunk but a family man (he has three kids); an Avengers superhero but a talented comic actor. Along with his shirtless cameo in Vacation and playing the receptionist in the upcoming Ghostbusters, he hosts SNL again on Saturday.

In a recent interview, Hemsworth discussed his new film, the box-office disappointment Blackhat and the stresses of being a Norse god.

Do you ever feel any pressure to live up to Thor?
You feel like you've tricked everyone successfully. I never felt big enough playing Thor. And then people talk about you like you're nine-foot tall and 800 pounds. I'm well aware of the illusion. There's not a second where I go: Yeah, I'm a god.

Are you aware there's another Thor in New York right now? It's the nickname of the hard-throwing New York Mets pitcher Noah Syndergaard.
(Laughs) I'll look him up! I think he's far more godlike than me.

The best scene of Thor must have been when Thor tries coffee for the first time, slams it on the floor and demands another.
It's funny, that's probably closer to me than the serious, gladiatorial-type Thor. I'd rather have fun with it. It comes easier. When doing Thor, those scenes where he (lowers voice) spoke like this and everything was grand and big, people thought: That's what he is. Saturday Night Live and Vacation, as well, are good opportunities to go: Actually it's not.

What was your experience on Michael Mann's cybercrime thriller Blackhat, which some critics defended but which flopped at the box office?
Really hard, actually. I love Michael and it was great. But I do wish I had done more of what I truly wanted to do. I remember being so in awe of him that I said I would just do anything he said, regardless of whether I agreed with it. And that's a real danger because someone hires you because they want to you bring what you're going to bring to the table. I was just so in awe of Michael Mann that I went, "Yep, cool. Wherever you want me." So I don't feel like it was my performance so much. And that wasn't the fault of Michael Mann.

You and Howard, however, seem to be a good team.
I can't speak for him but for me (Rush) was the first time I felt I was truly in an environment where I could just take risks and explore. Something felt sort of pure about that experience. And it was probably the role, too, something I directly related to or liked about that character. Full of insecurity and fear but also cockiness and overconfidence. It was all these contradictory things.

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Balancing the funny and the serious

PEOPLE PLACES THINGS

Kiwi actor departs from his usual roles in new film

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

Jemaine Clement is perhaps Hollywood's least likely leading man — if only because he doesn't really want to be one.

"I've had a couple of things that were more dramatic or more a leading role (but) I wasn't interested in doing a leading role," explained the Kiwi comic-actor over the line from New Zealand.

"I think I just wanted to do other kinds of things like writing and doing music."

One half of the popular Flight of the Conchords, Clement has been active since the comedy duo's HBO series final episode aired in 2009 but mostly working in the shadows as a supporting player in movies like Dinner With Schmucks or Muppets Most Wanted.

With this Friday's VOD release of the dramedy People Places Things however, Clement took on the rare role as leading man because "this time the idea didn't bother me; it didn't intimidate me like it once did."

In the film, Clement plays a graphic novelist flailing emotionally after he catches the mother of his twin girls having an affair with a mutual pal.

Forced into single fatherhood, he must juggle the minefield of being a dad and dating in Manhattan.

"Usually if someone is failing as a father, they're (less) in the story and you may not see that they have good intentions — you may not see that they're trying," said Clement, of his pull to the part that's drawn praise for its delicate balance of humour and hardship.

"Like real life, it's not all jokes and it's not all sad — it's somewhere in between."

Although Clement has been lauded for this compassionate leading man, he insists his aspirations lie in remaining a supporting actor.

Jemaine Clement, with Aundrea Gadsby and Gia Gadsby, in People Places Things. HANDOUT

In fact, he has even begun talking with his former partner Bret McKenzie about reuniting Flight of the Conchords — although a return to television is rather unlikely.

"It was like making a sitcom and recording an album in the time that you'd usually do one of those things. Either one of those things is hard enough," reminisced Clement.

"I enjoyed that (but) it's just that in the whole TV series, it was a lot to do."

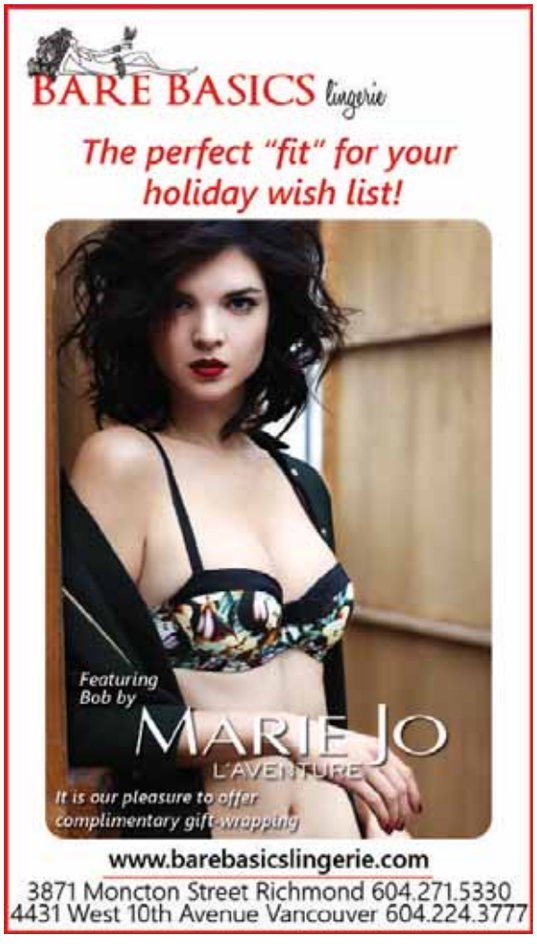
FAVOURITES

Jemaine Clement's favourite person, place and thing:

Favourite person
"Probably my son," admitted the comedian. "Usually I would answer my mum so it's between them — they have to fight it out."

Favourite place
"The Coromandel in New Zealand is really beautiful," said Clement of the country's popular holiday destination. "But New York is my favourite city so that will just have a battle too."

Favourite thing
"That's easy, my guitar," laughed Clement, who is planning on reuniting with his musical partner for Flight of the Conchords. "We have been hanging out and doing a little writing. It's not intensive yet (but) in a few months we'll be back into it."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DRAMA

In The Heart of the Sea

Director: Ron Howard
Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Benjamin Walker

In the winter of 1820, the New England whaling ship Essex was assaulted by something no one could believe: a whale of mammoth size and will. The real-life disaster would inspire Herman Melville's Moby-Dick.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 60% Audience: 70%

ART HOUSE/INTERNATIONAL

Every Thing Will Be Fine

Director: Wim Wenders
Starring: James Franco, Charlotte Gainsbourg

This searing drama charts the emotional odyssey of a struggling novelist whose life is turned upside down one wintry night following a fatal car accident. The incident sets him on a soul-searching journey toward redemption.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 15% Audience: 21%

DOCUMENTARY

Heart of a Dog

Director: Laurie Anderson
Starring: Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed

Artist Laurie Anderson reflects on the deaths of her husband, mother, beloved dog and subjects such as family memories, surveillance, and Buddhist teachings.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 98% Audience: 71%

ART HOUSE/INTERNATIONAL

Legend

Director: Brian Helgeland
Starring: Tom Hardy, Emily Browning

The true story of the rise and fall of London's most notorious gangsters, Reggie and Ronnie Kray, who captivated the public and once upon a time lorded over a criminal empire. An integral part of London's East End, and the iconic Swinging Sixties.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 60% Audience: 73%

THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

"I think In the Heart of the Sea is the only book that gave me actual nightmares"

THE MOVIE: In the Heart of the Sea

THE MEAL: Cod au gratin

Director Ron Howard's In the Heart of the Sea is the latest reimagining of the 1820 sinking of the American whaling ship Essex. After a sperm whale attack destroyed their vessel, 20 sailors were shipwrecked at sea thousands of miles off the coast of South America. Only eight men survived, partly on account of cannibalizing those who didn't.

Chris Hemsworth plays Owen Chase, the Essex's first mate who wrote a book in 1821 about the ship's horrifying final voyage. That book provided inspiration for Herman Melville's Moby-Dick in 1851. Meanwhile, Nathaniel Philbrick read both Chase and Melville and published In the Heart of the Sea in 2000, which Howard has now turned into a movie, which you can see starting Friday.

"Don't you remember how terrifying it was?" Simon recently asked of Philbrick's acclaimed bestseller. "I think it's the only book that gave me actual nightmares."

"I read it?"

"We both read it," he reminded me, "in Newfoundland."

That was 10 years ago. I had planned for months to go live by myself in a tiny outport called Grand Bruit, where my dad owned a house. Although I'd never published a single word, I was going to write a novel. A few months before I left Toronto I made another leviathan leap: although we'd only been dating for about eight months, I asked Simon to come with me.

Imagine this: no cars, no roads, a general store, a church, a school, which two 12-year-olds attended, and some 30 permanent residents. We arrived in autumn and stayed through the winter. When we iceskated on the endless network of frozen ponds nestled high up in the tuckamore-covered hills, it felt like we lived in a snow globe. Everywhere we looked — towards the ocean, the mountains, the cheerfully coloured saltbox houses — was picture-perfect. If only Instagram had existed.

And we read. The book that I most associate with Grand Bruit is Moby-Dick. I don't think that's entirely on account of it being the great American novel. It was the time — I was just about to turn 30 — and the place: sitting at night in front of the old Franklin stove with the wind whipping so fiercely outside that it felt like the house — which, coincidentally, reminded me of a ship's hull — would blow down.

We also ate: chow chow and copper pennies, partridgeberry pudding and bakeapple cheesecake, cod tongue, boiled vegetables flavoured with salt pork, salt cod flavoured with salt pork, and, my favourite, cod au gratin.

On Sunday night I pulled out my well-worn copy of What's Cooking in Grand Bruit, a collection of recipes compiled by the United Church women's association. There on page 25 was a cod au gratin recipe: make a roux of butter, flour and milk; add onion; pour over fresh cod fillets; top with bread crumbs and grated Cheddar cheese; bake.

It was so simple to make — and satisfying — that I wondered why I haven't made it more often. Maybe because my cod au gratin will never be as memorable as the fine people who made it for us, and cared for us, all those years ago.

And the novel I was supposed to write? In those six glorious months I wrote 12 pages. But boy, did I live.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

ENTERTAINMENT BRIEFS

Matt Damon to speak at MIT where he once played a janitor

Matt Damon shot to fame in the 1997 movie Good Will Hunting as a gifted janitor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Now, he has been selected to deliver the university's 2016 commencement address.

MIT announced Thursday that the Academy Award-winning actor, filmmaker, social activist and Cambridge native will address graduates on June 3.

Damon said in a statement that it's an honour to be named commencement speaker "at a school that I couldn't have gotten into."

MIT President L. Rafael Reif says Damon has "made us think about our world in new ways, and through his service, he has made it a better place." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Matt Damon
GETTY IMAGES

Michelle Obama and Jay Pharoah of SNL rap a 'go to college' video

America is seeing a new side of Michelle Obama, this time as rap artist.

The first lady and "Saturday Night Live" actor Jay Pharoah rhyme on a new video to encourage students to "go to college" and "fill your head with knowledge."

She also sings a brief solo about her Chicago hometown, with body movements and facial expressions like professional rappers.

The video is part of Mrs. Obama's new Better Make Room campaign to provide teens with the resources they need to pursue higher education.

The campaign is part of a broader initiative by the first lady to encourage students to continue their education after high school.

The comedy website College Humor released the brief video Thursday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

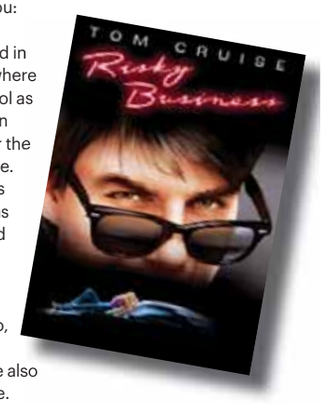
ON COLLEGE HUMOR SITE
The video is part of Mrs. Obama's new Better Make Room campaign to provide teens with the resources they need to pursue higher education.

SPONSORED CONTENT *HOLLYWOOD SUITE*

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW: TOM CRUISE?

In his prime, Tom Cruise was the ultimate in cool: one of the biggest heartthrobs in Hollywood who helped a certain sunglasses company sell millions of pairs just by wearing them... and wearing them well. That's carried him through an amazing four decades of success. From his breakout performance in the 1980s dark comedy Risky Business (playing this month on Hollywood Suite) to more recent turns in thrillers like the Mission: Impossible series, Cruise has had an unparalleled run of box office hits over the years.

Take a look back at Tom Cruise during his rise to fame with some facts that might surprise you:



- Cruise and his family lived in Ottawa from 1971 to 1974 (where he attended the same school as Bryan Adams!). His dad — an engineer — was working for the Canadian military at the time.
- The iconic Risky Business underwear dance scene was improvised — the script said only, "Joel dances in underwear through the house."
- Cruise earned his pilot's license in Markham, Ontario, during the filming of Top Gun — a movie for which he also learned to ride a motorcycle.
- Cruise was almost cast to play Kevin Bacon's part in Footloose (1984), but had to back out because of scheduling conflicts.
- He was the first actor to star in both the Oscar winner for Best Picture, Rain Man (1988) and the Razzie "winner" for Worst Picture, Cocktail (1988), in the same year.
- The Disney character Aladdin (1992) was modelled on Tom Cruise's good looks.

Rediscover Tom Cruise's rise to Hollywood powerhouse through the '80s and '90s. Starting Dec. 8 and running until Jan. 12, Hollywood Suite is offering a free preview of uncut and commercial-free movies that shaped the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s. Available on television service providers across the country, this free preview includes access to Hollywood Suite On Demand, where available. Featured films include Risky Business and such Cruise classics as Days of Thunder (1990), A Few Good Men (1992), The Firm (1993), and Mission: Impossible (1996).

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STAR METRO Content Solutions

Daisy Ridley is not giving away anything

INTERVIEW

Actress talks Star Wars, keeps movie's secrets

Daisy Ridley may not be as brave as her character in Star Wars: The Force Awakens, but she's close.

In her first-ever film role, the 23-year-old British-born actress plays Rey, a pilot and scavenger at the centre of the action in the hugely anticipated Episode VII.

The hardest thing about the job, Ridley said, was overcoming her own fears.

"It's one thing for other people to see potential in you and it's quite another for you to understand that and see it in yourself," she said.

"So of course everyone else being wonderful helps, but there's a certain level of growth... you have to do as a person... It's just like life times a million."

Right now, that life is a sniffley one that includes lots of airplanes and interviews.

The film's nonstop promotional schedule has left Ridley with a cold that has her wrapped in a winter coat on a recent warm Southern California day.

But even illness doesn't weaken her resolve when it comes to keeping the film's hotly guarded secrets.

Though co-star Harrison Ford has said Rey wields a lightsaber in the film, Ridley deflected the question when asked directly.

"Finn and Kylo have a fight with a lightsaber," is all she would say, referring to co-stars John Boyega and Adam Driver, whose tussle has already been shown in the film's trailers.

The actress did undergo months of physical training to prepare for her role, a regimen that included weightlifting, climbing and "staff training" — footage shows Rey running and fighting with a staff.

How much different could a lightsaber be?

"I had to look like I could look after myself in the desert and drag and scavenging things across sand," she said.

> **It's one thing for other people to see potential in you and it's quite another for you to understand that and see it in yourself.**
> Daisy Ridley

The youngest of five, Ridley appeared in small roles in medical and crime television dramas in the U.K. before capturing director J.J. Abrams' attention in her audition for The Force Awakens.

The film's set transported Ridley to the Star Wars world, where Abrams and the cast helped allay an initial feeling she describes as "terror."

"Luckily, to have J.J. there, who is so kind and considerate and encouraging, and to have a crew of people who made me feel safe and not rushed and not pressured, that is precisely what took the pressure off."

So did bonding with Boyega. The two would sing songs from The Lion King before shooting their scenes and explored the markets of Abu Dhabi on their one shared day off.

"We got on so well," Ridley said.

"It was so much fun all the time, and to have him with me through this whole thing, both in filming and afterward, has been incredible."

One thing the actress isn't prepared for is the level of fame she's likely to experience. She tries not to think about it.

"The fame side of things is a weird twist that I'm not kind of interested in," she said.

"If I was going to be recognized for anything, Star Wars is all right."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Daisy Ridley plays Rey in Star Wars: The Force Awakens.
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5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOLDEN GLOBES

1 Oops!

The Golden Globes' official Twitter account was drawing flak even before the nominees were announced after mistaking presenter America Ferrera for Gina Rodriguez.

In a series of tweets, which have since been amended, the Globes linked to Rodriguez's twitter account (@HereIsGina) instead of Ferrera's (@AmericaFerrera).

Luckily, attentive social media users did what they do best and captured the offending tweets — while throwing in some snarky responses for good measure.

2 Canada's sole nominee

Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue was the only Canuck to pick up a nomination this year. Donoghue, who is based in London, Ont., got the nod for the adaptation of her novel, Room. The book tells the story of a young boy and his mother who are held captive in a shed. The film won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival earlier this year and has been generating major Oscar buzz. Directed by Lenny Abrahamson, the movie also picked up Golden Globe nominations for best film drama and best film actress in a drama for Bree Larson, who plays the child's mother.

3 Must-sees before 2015 ends

Several big-screen nominees are not even being released until Christmas. Leonardo DiCaprio is nominated for The Revenant, a film about a 19th century frontiersman that is also in the running for best motion picture - drama, best director and best original score. Will Smith is nominated for Concussion, which tells the story of the doctor who discovers the prevalence of brain damage in professional football players.

4 No surprises here

It's no surprise that Julia Louis-Dreyfus picked up another nomination for her starring role in HBO series, Veep. It's Louis-Dreyfus's fourth nomination for the comedy, and the seventh in her career. Box office hit The Martian received three nominations: best picture comedy, best director (Ridley Scott) and best actor (Matt Damon). Released in October, the two-hour-plus sci-fi comedy has already grossed more than $221 million in the U.S.

5 The omissions

Kevin Spacey, who took home the Golden Globe for best actor in a TV drama last year for House of Cards, was shut out this time around. Mad Men only got one nomination for its final season — Jon Hamm is up for best actor in a TV drama series.

And despite generating Oscar buzz and picking up Golden Globe nominations for best picture, best screenplay and best director, the ensemble cast for Boston Globe investigation drama Spotlight came up empty. Mark Ruffalo was nominated for another film, Infinitely Polar Bear, in which he plays a man with bipolar disorder.

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Alicia Vikander was nominated for a Golden Globe award for best actress in a motion picture drama for her role in The Danish Girl. FOCUS FEATURES VIA AP

Learning to let go

INTERVIEW

Vikander talks the emotional journey of a historic couple

Matt Prigge
Metro | New York

Before she read the script, Alicia Vikander says she wasn't aware The Danish Girl had a strong second female role. It's the tale of Lili Elbe (played by Eddie Redmayne), one of the first people, in the 1920s, to transition from male to female. That also meant parting ways with Gerda, her wife from when she was Einar, an esteemed painter. The Ex Machina actress takes the other lead, and she says — speaking to us while making the next Bourne movie — the film explores both a transgender pioneer and what her transition did to her relationship with Gerda, who had to find strength to let her go.

You do a lot of period films, from A Royal Affair to Anna Karenina to Testament of Youth. Do you sometimes feel lost going from one era to another?

I get stuck in them. Sometimes I don't know what century I'm in. But it's a great skill to have as an actor, to have sets and costumes already there. It does a lot for you to be able to throw yourself into a new story and immediately get a sense of the world you're in when you get there.

The Danish Girl does bring you back to portraying Scandinavian culture.

It's part of my history and my life growing up. Back during A Royal Affair, I loved being back in the 18th century. I was able to find personal connections to Caroline Mathilde (her character), and it gave me a lot to being someone's voice from such a long time ago.... With The Danish Girl we tried to find historical inspirations, but it was also about meeting people, who had such generosity, in the transgender community, especially people like my character who had been friends or loved ones of people transitioning.

What kinds of things did you learn from people who had been close to people transitioning?

Every single story ends up being extremely different. Sometimes they said it was tough to give them that time. They said they were also transitioning. Like any couple going through a huge change, they both needed to find their feet on the ground in a new location. That's something I could relate to with whatever you're going through as everything's changing around.

I'd argue this is also a great break-up film, and one that isn't about a couple who split bitterly. It's about their struggles to maintain a connection despite parting ways.

Love includes being able to let that person go, the person you love the most. You still have affection for someone, even when things get bad. It was a unique story, but I was amazed by the romantic aspect, and the love between them. Of course they go off on different roads, but they go on the same journey.... They know that and they're still able to reach out and tell the other person they're connected somehow. That's something I felt from page one to the end.

INTERVIEW

Actor gained insight from transgender community

Matt Prigge
Metro | New York

Eddie Redmayne is up for a Golden Globe for best actor in a drama for his role in The Danish Girl. FOCUS FEATURES VIA AP

Redmayne's re-education

Eddie Redmayne is very aware of how much has changed in the last couple years. Mainstream acceptance of the trans community has been on the rise, and there is now greater demand for trans roles to be played by trans actors, as with Laverne Cox on Orange is the New Black and the cast of Tangerine.

Redmayne, to his credit, took the subject very seriously as soon as he was involved with The Danish Girl, about Lili Elbe, one of the first people to transition from male to female, a number of years ago.

The Oscar-winner talks about how his education meant more to him than just doing a film.

You actually won your Oscar for The Theory of Everything while you were shooting The Danish Girl. That must have been a gear-shift.
We were quite in the thick of shooting. I flew out to Los Angeles with my wife, and it was the most frenzied, adrenaline-fuelled two days of euphoria and excitement. There was so much adrenaline pumping into my body I can barely remember any of it.

The next thing I knew we were back on set, doing a scene where Lily was undergoing surgery. I was lying there on this bed and the whole thing felt like this weird dream. Very odd.

You were involved with this for a few years before it was finally green-lit. It seems like that gave you time to research and get it right.
Until it was green-lit, it was more about learning for my own sake. I'd been attached to it, then it didn't look like it was happening. Then when I was working with Lana Wachowski (on Jupiter Ascending), I mentioned Lili and Gerda (her former wife, played by Alicia Vikander) to her, and she was incredibly passionate about her story and spoke so eloquently about Gerda's paintings of Lili. She pointed me to where I should start educating myself. Then once it got green-lit, I started meeting members of the trans community from different generations. Everyone was so stunningly generous in sharing their experiences in order to educate me. Above and beyond the film, life-wise it was an amazing thing.

What kinds of things in particular did you learn?
I'd always summed that being transgender involved some form of physical transformation, and I realized that's absolutely not the case. It's entirely to do with what's in one's mind. Whether one has undergone any physical changes is neither here nor there. All the women I talked to described how they had known from a very early age that they were a different gender than that which they'd been assigned at birth. What was important for me was that when Lili was living as Einar, she was uncomfortable in this guise.

The Lili of later in the film is very different from when she was first transitioning.
I spoke to one trans woman in Los Angeles who described early in her transition, there was an experimentation of trying makeup. Perhaps she would put too much makeup on or wear clothes that were overly feminine. She made mistakes, almost. She called it "hyper-feminization." She related it to a young girl's puberty or adolescence — of trying things. Looking at Gerda's paintings of Lili, the poses are quite feminine and almost heightened. That was an insight. As she's unpeeling and finding herself, she's almost copying.

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Hit podcast's second season is here

SERIAL

Taliban prisoner's story to be a TV show

The widely popular podcast Serial has arrived.

In the highly-anticipated second season, NPR producer Sarah Koenig tells the story of Bowe Bergdahl, a U.S. soldier who was taken prisoner by the Taliban after disappearing from a base in Afghanistan in 2009.

After five years in captivity, Bergdahl was released in a prisoner exchange and U.S. President Barack Obama announced that he was on his way home.

But, as Koenig explains, while Bergdahl's release was initially celebrated, "public reaction to his return flipped."

Soldiers from his unit called him a deserter and the U.S. army launched an investigation into how he was taken prisoner.

"Through all of this, Bergdahl has been quiet. He hasn't spoken to the press or done any interviews on TV. He's been like a ghost at the centre of a raucous fight," Serial explains.

In the first episode — called "DUSTWUN," the military acronym for "duty status — whereabouts unknown," which is available online — listeners hear Bergdahl's voice, from about 25 hours of taped phone conversations with filmmaker Mark Boal.

Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the focus of Serial's second season, was held prisoner for years by the Taliban. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **The consequences of that decision, they spin out, wider and wider. And at every turn you're surprised, the picture changes.**
>
> NPR producer Sarah Koenig, on Bergdahl's story

"There I was in the open desert and I'm not about to outrun a bunch of motorcycles," Bergdahl tells Boal near the end of the episode about how he was taken. "I couldn't do anything against six or seven guys with AK47s. They pulled up, and that was it."

Boal, who wrote and produced Zero Dark Thirty and The Hurt Locker, is Koenig's production partner for season two.

"This one idiosyncratic guy makes a radical decision at the age of 23, to walk away into Afghanistan, and the consequences of that decision, they spin out, wider and wider. And at every turn you're surprised, the picture changes," Koenig says in the first episode about Bergdahl's story.

"To get the full picture, you need to go very, very small, into one person's life — and also very, very big, into the war in Afghanistan."

People quickly took to social media to celebrate the podcast's return.

"More intriguing than I expected w. bergdahl's story," wrote Twitter user Lauren Woods, "guessing it will get even better."

"Raise your hand if all you really care about is listening to the first episode of season 2 of @serial," added Claire Cole.

And some were already hooked. "Just listened to Serial season 2. Pretty much got me engrossed. I'm into this story," wrote Amy Hoag.

Season two — which will be told over eight to 10 episodes, Koenig told the New York Times — is being developed into a TV show.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Spirit of the West's time for a rest

HOME FOR A REST

Last call for band behind classic pub-crawl song

Alan Cross
For Metro Canada

You'll have to excuse me, I'm not at my best/ I've been gone for a week, I've been drunk since I left

If someone has written a better drinking song than Spirit of the West's Home for a Rest, I haven't heard it. While in the U.K., frontman John Mann and guitarist Geoffrey Kelly documented a rather intense crawl of pubs and other establishments over the course of a week.

You'll have to excuse me, I'm not at my best
I've been gone for a week, I've been drunk since I left
These so-called vacations will soon be my death
I'm so sick from the drink, I need home for a rest.

The song originally appeared on Spirit of the West's 1990 album, Save This House, and has since become the classic Canadian drinking song. Most musicians only dream of writing a song that spans generations. I'm pretty sire an ability to recite the lyrics is part of the citizenship test.

Things have not been going well for John over the last decade. In 2009, he was diagnosed with colorectal cancer but was able to overcome it. By 2011, he was cancer-free.

But then he noticed that he was having more trouble remembering things. He'd been experiencing minor lapses as far back as 2001 but they seemed to be getting worse. Song lyrics were forgotten. Familiar guitar chord changes were lost. The memory issues got worse during his cancer treatments but his doctors thought they'd go away once the cancer was eradicated.

They didn't. In fact, they got worse.

In September 2014, John and his wife, playwright Jill Daum, decided to go public with John's condition. Barely into his 50s, he was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, an incurable degeneration of cognitive functions. With the time John has left, he and Jill want to do what they can about raising awareness of a disease that's going to become more prevalent as the population ages.

John can still perform, but he needs help. Lyrics are on an iPad. He has someone with him to guide him through the performance. But Spirit of the West recognizes that the time has come to bring the band's career to a gracious close. A couple of farewell shows have been set for the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver on April 15 and 16.

THERAPY

How you can help

Meanwhile, John and Jill are not giving up. Having exhausted every possible treatment, they are now turning to experimental and very expensive stem cell therapy. One course of treatment can cost up to $50,000. If you're interested in helping out, you can donate at Generosity.com.

For more, go to AJournalofMusicalThings.com or follow me on twitter at @alancross.

BOOK BRIEF

Big shake of a lamb's tale

This is the story of how an injured lamb named Sweet Pea started a war. Well, a bidding war. John and Jennifer Churchman's lamb hurt a leg on the Vermont farm where they keep sheep, ducks and geese.

To celebrate Sweet Pea's recovery, the couple dressed up their animals, fed them delicacies like pumpkin slices and shared photos online. The images formed the illustrations for Sweet Pea & Friends: The SheepOver, a children's book they initially self-published.

Within days of a blog post about Sweet Pea by a local bookstore owner, the Churchmans had a literary agent. A bidding war for the story among five major publishing houses followed.

The story of Sweet Pea, published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, is in stores in time for Christmas. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sweet Pea book in a store. AP

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Raising a glass to fine wines

RECOMMENDATIONS

The good stuff can be found in almost every price range

Peter Rockwell

Are you haunted by the gifts of wine you gave from Christmases past? Here are a dozen bottles that are guaranteed to put a smile on the face of the wine lovers on your holiday shopping list.

FOR THE WINE NEWBIE

Not to say that anyone, no matter how wine engaged, wouldn't appreciate these wines, but they'll especially appeal to those just getting their palates wet.

1

KWV 2014 Contemporary Collection Chenin Blanc (South Africa, $9.45–$10.99): A thirst-quenching dry white with plenty of light green fruit and balanced acidity.

Radio Boka 2013 Tempranillo (Spain, $10.95–$13.99): Still undiscovered by many, the wines of Spain's Valencia region are real palate pleasers, with this well-priced Tempranillo a tasty mix of black cherry and subtle spice.

Fairview 2014 Goats do Roam Red (South Africa, $12.95–$14.99): With a name poking fun at France's Côtes du Rhône region it's no wonder that this is a Shiraz-led blend of six different grapes. Light and juicy, its plummy fruit is drinkable right out of the bottle.

2

The Entertainer 2013 Red Blend (Australia, $15.95–$16.99): Made by Wolf Blass in honour of its gregarious founder, this ripe, rounded red blend of Shiraz and Grenache has loads of berry fruit and a hint of residual sugar.

FOR THE ENTHUSIAST

If you're friends with an aficionado, one of these wines should turn their corkscrew.

Anselmi 2014 San Vincenzo IGT (Italy, $16.95–$20.99): This inspired blend of Garganega, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc is a muscular white with complex citrus and apricot. Aging in steel vats means there won't be any oak to distract you from the forward fruit.

O'Leary Unoaked Chardonnay VQA (Ontario, $13.95–$18.99): One for the business-minded. Mr. Wonderful, Kevin O'Leary, joins the celebrity winemaking scene with this refreshing, citrus-meets-green apple Chardonnay perfect for seafood (even shark).

3

McManis Family Vineyards 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (California, $19.95): A full-figured California Cabernet with thick, cassis-laden fruit and a touch of smoky wood thanks to six months of oak aging. Though big on ripe, jammy flavours, this is a surprisingly balanced red that drinks super smooth.

Jacob's Creek 2013 Double Barrel Shiraz (Australia, $19.95–$20.99): Both wine and brown spirit fans will enjoy this uniquely aged Barossa Valley Shiraz that sees finishing time in used Scotch barrels. It all leads to a big-boned red with loads of chewy wood and dark chocolate.

4

Bonterra 2013 Chardonnay (California, $19.95): As the granddaddy of American organic wine producers, Bonterra's made a name for itself by making consistent, full-flavoured wines like this Chardonnay. Fresh, bright and oozing tropical pineapple, lime and lemon, it makes for a perfect partner with roast poultry.

IF MONEY IS NO OBJECT

The holidays are all about giving; just be around when they open one of these bottles.

Montresor 2013 Amarone della Valpolicella (Italy, $36.45–$43.99): Though you can drink them with food, an Amarone is a slow sipper, best paired with good conversation. Made by pressing dried grapes, this is a robust core of plums, raisins and dark black fruit, which makes it a great dinner opener and closer.

Taylor Fladgate 20-Year-Old Tawny Port (Portugal, $62.79–$68.95): No liquid goes better with a roaring fire and cheese (especially Stilton) than Port. Made from a blend of 20-year-old wines, this is a sublime mix of brown sugar, nuts and spices.

5

Moët & Chandon 2004 Dom Pérignon Champagne (France, $224.29–$249.95): Named for a French monk, Dom Pérignon is arguably the most recognizable name from Champagne. The 2003 balances sophisticated citrus fruit with enough depth to float a cruise ship, ready for any occasion.

6

1 KWV 2014 Contemporary Collection Chenin Blanc, $9.95–$10.99
2 Fairview 2014 Goats do Roam Red, $12.95–$14.99
3 Bonterra 2013 Chardonnay, $19.95
4 McManis Family Vineyards 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, $19.95
5 Jacob's Creek 2013 Double Barrel Shiraz, $19.95–$20.99
6 Moet & Chandon 2004 Dom Pérignon Champagne, $224.29–$249.95
7 St-Germain Elderflower, $41.95
8 Forty Creek Distillery El Espolon Reposado Tequila, $44.75
9 New Holland Beer Barrel Bourbon, $73.05
10 Remy Martin Louis XIII Cognac, $3,100

Finding the right spirit of the season

Spirit lovers are a complicated bunch: Brand loyal to a fault, many are becoming more open-minded when it comes to putting something new into their mouths. That makes finding the perfect gift for the hard liquor fan on your holiday list a bit of a challenge. Well, not really, any one of these unique spirits of Christmas present will make the perfect present.

Belvedere 007 SPECTRE Limited Edition Vodka ($49.95-$49.98): Bond, James Bond is back and he's drinking cocktails again. Belvedere is an official sponsor of SPECTRE, 007's latest adventure, and you can shake, but not stir, your next martini with a shot of this limited edition version of their quintessential vodka.

7

St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur ($41.95-$49.95): Liqueurs are a strange beast. While the best sellers are coffee, cream or brandy-based, they have so much more to offer. St-Germain is all about the elderflower. Great chilled on its own, it's one of the best mixers with wine.

8

The Kraken Black Spiced Rum Ceramic Decanter ($41.95-$44.99): Rum's recent renaissance came with a spicy edge, and Kraken, with its black, savoury drinkability and cool packaging, is at the center of its celebrity. Taking its bottle to the next level, this limited edition is a must for any rum lover.

Domaine Pinnacle Chic Choc Spiced Rum ($33.75-$34.99): Made in Quebec, this rum is a blend of Nordic spices, including peppery green alder and whiterod berries, harvested from the province's Chic Choc Mountains. Nice and spicy, it's a great base for holiday cocktails.

Cîroc Grape Spirit ($49.98-$49.95): Being made with grapes means Cîroc is more eau-du-vie than vodka. Technicalities aside, this neutral spirit, whose brand ambassador just happens to be Sean 'Diddy' Combs, has a fruitier side that works wonders when blended with fruit juices.

Compass Box Great King Street Glasgow Blended Whisky ($57.45): Glaswegians like their whisky full-bodied and peaty and this modern take on Scotland's classic 19th century blends offers both in spades. Aging in used sherry barrels adds a backbone of dried fruit and wine to the mix.

9

Death's Door Gin ($37.95): Named for the passageway between Wisconsin's Washington Island and the Door County peninsula, Death's Door doesn't hit you over the head with its combination of botanicals. It doesn't need to, here mellow is more and its reserved flavour profile is pleasingly creamy and smooth.

10

Forty Creek Distillery El Espolón Reposado Tequila ($44.75): Wrapped in a cool Day of the Dead-themed label and made with 100 per cent Blue Agave, aged for six months in American oak barrels, this lightly wooded reposado drinks well above its price point.

New Holland Beer Barrel Bourbon ($73.05): Twice distilled and initially aged in American oak, this whisky then sees three months in used beer barrels, which adds biscuity notes and a relaxed malty character to its rich toffee and caramel flavour.

Highland Park Dark Origins Single Malt Whisky ($99.95): Inspired by the distillery's infamous founder Magnus Eunson, this scotch drinks as sexy as it looks. Layered with chocolate, citrus and sherry thanks to being aged in twice as many first fill sherry casks as the original Highland Park 12-year-old.

Remy Martin Louis XIII Cognac ($3,100): If Cognac is the king of spirits then Louis XIII is the king of kings. Made with a blend of brandy, some of which is over a century old, it comes housed in a decanter designed by Baccarat Crystal.

PETER ROCKWELL

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The ultimate gifts for foodies

GIFT IDEAS

Some holiday favourites for those who love the kitchen

Tina Anson Mine

Whether you're looking for the tried-and-true or something a little different, these gifts are sure to delight the food lovers and aspiring chefs in your life.

For the retro enthusiast

Streamline Kitchen Timer. It's the details that make the look. This classic old-school kitchen timer watches the time (up to 55 minutes) and looks stylish doing it. It has an easy-to-set retro dial accented in bold black and red, and the case comes in an assortment of throwback colours, including mint green, burnt orange and fire-engine red. It's a cute gift that won't break your budget — you might even want to give your favourite cook two. $17.99 at Home Outfitters, homeoutfitters.com.

For the seafood lover

Outset Oyster Grill Pan. The holidays fall smack in the middle of oyster season, and Canadians are no strangers to grilling in their parkas. So why not indulge the oyster lover on your list with this funky pan? Made of sturdy cast iron, it has perfectly shaped holes to hold a dozen oysters on the grill without spilling any of their tasty juices. You can also use it to serve oysters cold on the half-shell if you're not that into winter grilling. $47.99 at Home Outfitters, homeoutfitters.com.

For the baker

Cambria Cake Stand. If you're going to go to all the trouble — and joy! — of baking a beautiful cake, you need something equally pretty to put it on. With clean lines and a modern but slightly rustic look, these laid-back cake stands come in a bunch of juicy hues. They're perfect for entertaining a holiday crowd at home. $73 at Pottery Barn, potterybarn.ca.

For the wine lover

Copper Wine Bottle Cooler. This stylish copper-toned chiller has the panache of a real copper bucket without the insane price tag. Sturdy iron handles give it a masculine edge and make it easy to tote from kitchen to table. Hint: To quick-chill your wine, add ice, fill the bucket about halfway with cold water and add a handful of salt before adding the bottle. $65 at Pottery Barn, potterybarn.ca.

For the coffee addict

Le Creuset Café Stoneware French Press. This 27-ounce pot holds about three generous cups of coffee — just right for sharing a morning pick-me-up with a friend. Made of sturdy ceramic, it keeps coffee hot much longer than typical glass or metal French presses. The beautifully enameled stoneware is durable and looks great on the counter. $80 at Williams-Sonoma, williams-sonoma.ca.

For the techno-cook

Sony Xperia Z3 tablet. This tablet is waterproof. Yes, you heard that right. While you can't dunk it all the way underwater (there are limits), this slim, compact Android-platform device tolerates splatters and can even take a quick rinse under the tap. It makes cooking your favourite online recipes a tidier experience. $699.99 without a plan or $49.99 with select two-year plans at bell.ca or rogers.ca.

For the gadget lover

Vegetable Spiralizer. Remember how much you loved that Tornado Potato at The Ex? Get ready to make it at home. This clever machine turns vegetables into four different-size spirals, from tiny angel hair (great for raw veggie "noodles") to wide, flat spirals (for those deep-fried potato curlicues you're now craving). Made of sturdy plastic and super-fast to use, it's a fun kitchen toy. $64.50 at Lee Valley, leevalley.com.

For the hipster health nut

KoMo FlicFloc Manual Flaker. Why buy a sack of stale rolled oats at the grocery store when you can make them fresh at home? This old-fashioned hand mill turns raw oat groats into easy-to-use flakes that retain all the nutrients in the whole grain. Lovingly made of birch and steel, it's a keeper you can pass on to the next generation. $179, at Grain Storm, grainstorm.com.

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By L. Frank Baum • With Music & Lyrics by Harold Arlen & E.Y. Harburg
Background Music by Herbert Stothart • Dance and Vocal Arrangements by Peter Howard
Orchestration by Larry Wilcox • Adapted by John Kane for the Royal Shakespeare Company
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1 Poo-Pourri Before-You-Go Toilet Spray ($12.25 - $18.50)
2 Cotton Mesh Produce Bag ($15.50)
3 Anointment Natural Skin Care Wet Shave Kit ($60)
4 Bamboo Towel Set ($45)
5 Magnifeco by Kate Black ($19.95)

Have a green Christmas

ECO-FRIENDLY

Think about the environment and others

Todd Lewys

With the green movement gaining momentum, we thought we'd include a cross-section of novel eco-friendly gift choices for your consideration.

Anointment Natural Skin Care Wet Shave Kit: This gift set includes a handcrafted pottery shaving scuttle, shave brush and old-fashioned, unscented shaving soap. The soap contains moisturizing French green clay, skin-soothing ground sandalwood and flaxseed — plus castor oil for impressively dense foam. $60 at Grassroots Environmental Products at grassrootsstore.com.

Magnifeco: Your Head-To-Toe Guide to Ethical Fashion and Non-Toxic Beauty, by Kate Black: This book by Kate Black is, in just a few words, a head-to-toe guide to ethical fashion and non-toxic beauty. Black examines these subjects, recommends a number of ways for consumers to make better decisions and introduces the brands and designers leading the way along this socially responsible path. $19.95 at Amazon.ca.

Bamboo Sheet Set: Sold by British Columbia eco-retailer All Things Being Eco, these bamboo sheets — available in queen and king size sets — offer a rich lustre, soft feel and, due to their bamboo construction, are very durable. $165-$195 at allthingsbeingeco.ca.

Cotton Mesh Produce Bag: Made right here in Canada, this cotton mesh produce bag is an environmentally responsible — not to mention good looking — alternative to using plastic bags.

You can use it to take your fruits and veggies home from the market, and the breathable mesh allows for easy storage in the fridge. $15.50 at eco-handbags.ca.

Bamboo Towel Set: Softer and more absorbent than cotton, these towels are made of 100 per cent bamboo viscose yarn. Naturally hypo-allergenic, anti-microbial and more odour-resistant than cotton, the set comes with a bath towel, hand towel and face cloth. $45 at allthingsbeingeco.ca.

Bookhou for Mini Mioche Hoodie Tee: The Toronto-based company enlisted local designer Bookhou to design a winning hoodie-tee for children. The result is a 100 per cent organic cotton hoodie tee that comes in 10 sizes and three prints — olive triangle, black bure and eggplant floral. $33 at minimioche.com.

Chemex Coffee Maker: With four sizes to choose from — three, six, eight and 10 cups — this coffee maker is as green as you can find. Made of non-porous borosilicate glass, the carafe doesn't absorb odours or retain harmful chemical residues. It uses patented Chemex bonded filters (US$8.90). US$38.90-$47.50 at chemexcoffeemaker.com or Amazon.ca.

4

VerTerra Palm Leaf Dinnerware: Greenmunch — based in Sherwood Park, Alta. — offers VerTerra Palm Leaf Dinnerware plates made from fallen palm leaves and water. They are microwave safe up to two minutes on high, and are oven-safe at 350 degrees for up to 45 minutes. One hundred per cent compostable, they biodegrade in less than two months. $14-$27 at greenmunch.ca.

5

Weleda Calendula Baby Face Cream: Made with 96 per cent organic ingredients, this cream is free of synthetic fragrances, chemical preservatives and petroleum-derived ingredients. It moisturizes and softens baby's sensitive skin. $23 at minimioche.com, well.ca and other retailers.

Poo-Pourri Before-You-Go Toilet Spray: According to the good folks at All Things Being Eco, this makes a great stocking stuffer. Little wonder — an ounce of perfumed prevention can go a long way in the bathroom. $12.25-$18.50 at allthingsbeingeco.ca.

Send the gift of money worldwide.

This holiday, send money to family and friends worldwide from your Scotiabank account through a smartphone, online or by visiting a branch.

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Pets set to get Xmas benefits

Ylva Van Buuren

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring... except for the family pet who was sniffing around under the tree.

Wrap up one of these practical and fun gift ideas for the pets on your list.

PICTURE PERFECT: A make-your-own pet calendar is a wonderful and thoughtful gift for any animal lover. A3 or A4 Wall Calendars feature 13 photos each. $22 at Photobox.ca.

CHEW ON THIS: Plush dog chew toy, $5.99 at Winners, winners.ca.

RAIN DATE: Some dogs dislike the rain.... but the Pet Life Pour-Protection Umbrella will keep them dry. It has a reflective lining and leash holder. $34 at Amazon.ca.

ADD LIGHT YEARS: Active cats will love the Petsafe Bolt Interactive Laser Toy — and it gives owners quality time with their pet too. $21.99 at Amazon.ca

HOLIDAY HELP: Wrap up a CanadaHelps Charity Gift Card — and invite the recipient to choose the charity from hundreds dedicated to the welfare of animals. Available in any denomination starting at $5 at CanadaHelps.org.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS: Cats travel in comfort and style in a Sherpa Original Deluxe Carrier. Available in small, medium and large sizes, it comes with a seat belt and luggage strap. $69.99-$79.99 at Canvasback Pet Supplies, canvasbackpets.com.

PAW PROTECTION: Wellies dog boots protect paws from snow, salt, rain and mud. Extra-wide opening and Velcro closure make them easy to put on and take off. In black or red, durable yet soft silicone rubber. Different sizes start at $20.99. Canada Pooch Stores, canadapooch.com.

TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT: Invite your four-legged friend to curl up on this designer dog bed by Jo Alcorn. $99 at Shop.ca.

STINKY POOCH? The Rainburst Simple Shower uses a hydration reservoir or a 2L bottle of water to hose down your pet, and that will be a welcome gift for anyone who hikes or camps with their foraging four-legged friend (you never know what they're going to discover in the bushes!) $10.75 at Mountain Equipment Co-op, mec.ca.

FOR BIRD BRAINS: Spirale cotton rope bird toy by ZooMax has pony beads and a small bell for fun play. Non-toxic. Assembles with a small wire. $10.99 at Pet Valu, petvalu.com.

SPECIAL OCCASION: You can dress them up and pretty well take them anywhere in a Pet Rainbow Tutu. Small, medium and large sizes, $7.99 at Pet Valu, petvalu.com.

BARK BINGO: Wrap up a dog bingo game for the pet lover on your list. $39.95 at Crate and Barrel, crateandbarrel.ca.

PLAY BALL: Dogs can learn to retrieve with the Toys "R" Us Pets Fetch N' Treat Interactive Dog Toy — when the dog retrieves the ball and drops it in, the toy gives him a treat. $29.99 at PetSmart, petsmart.ca.

FEATHERED FRIENDS: Perky Pet Mason Jar Wild Bird Seed Feeder looks like a vintage blue glass canning jar used in the 1800s, and will add a rustic appeal to any yard or balcony. The feeder has eight feeding ports and holds about one pound of seeds. $26.99 at Canvasback Pet Supplies, canvasbackpets.com.

JINGLE BELL: Adjustable glow-in-the-dark collar is comfortable and lightweight, and a jingle bell makes it easy to find the cat. Martha Stewart Pets collar, $9.99 at PetSmart, petsmart.ca.

SOLE SAVING: For dogs that have trouble walking on hardwood, Muttsoks paw protection socks have non-skid soles for indoor traction. Six sizes, $11 (set of 4) at muttluks.com.

1 Pet Rainbow Tutu, $7.99 at Pet Valu, petvalu.com.
2 Petsafe Bolt Interactive Laser Toy, $21.99 at Amazon.ca.
3 Perky Pet Mason Jar Wild Bird Seed Feeder, $26.99 at Canvasback Pet Supplies, canvasbackpets.com.
4 Designer dog bed by Jo Alcorn, $99 at Shop.ca.
5 Sherpa Original Deluxe Carrier, $69.99-$79.99 at Canvasback Pet Supplies, canvasbackpets.com.
6 Rainburst Simple Shower, $10.75 at Mountain Equipment Co-op, mec.ca.
7 Pet Life Pour-Protection Umbrella, $34 at Amazon.ca.

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CHARITY GIFT GIVING

UNICEF is helping lift children out of poverty

When kids catch the news, they have a hard time figuring out what they can do to help people who are suffering a world a way.

Buying charitable gifts makes a difference and helps kids feel better, says Sharon Avery, Chief Development Officer with UNICEF Canada.

"What helps kids deal with that is knowing they can do something about it," she says.

Investing in programs that combat poverty, while educating children and getting them healthy, is part of the solution to many of the world's problems, Avery says.

"To look ahead at the future of the world, one of the ways to make it a safer place is to combat poverty and provide education to kids — that's really what's going to create stronger countries and communities and economies and really battle the things we're seeing in the news right now."

Michael Ungar, Halifax author, university professor and family therapist, says kids are actually hard-wired to want to give and help other people.

UNICEF FACTS

- UNICEF is biggest procurer of pencils and vaccines in the world.
- The Survival Gifts program started in 2004, and has grown every year.
- Popular items in the past for Canadians have been water-related products. Last year, the biggest seller was Plumpy'Nut packets which help malnourished children gain weight quickly (153,000 packages sold last year), and bed nets are always popular.

"We tend to think of them as a selfish generation but that's not true at all," he says.

Giving is all part of their development, he says. Kids want to be more adult-like and increase their responsibility and sense of self.

"And that's where the problem is: we as adults take that away from them."

Of course, it's easier to pick out a present, wrap it, and give it to your child and say "give this to your teacher and say thank you," Ungar says. But it's more meaningful if the child spends some of his own money and writes a thank-you card himself.

ISTOCK

"If the purpose is to raise kids who think of themselves as part of families and communities and want to contribute, to build that capacity so they're nice people, nice citizens, then give them those opportunities."

— *Jennifer Taplin*

CONTRIBUTED

Music therapy hits the right note for loved ones

Give the gift of music this holiday season. Purchase an hour of music therapy for those who need it most from the Music Heals Charitable Foundation. Music Heals is a Vancouver-based foundation that raises money and awareness for music therapy across Canada, and has donated almost a half-million dollars in just three years to programs serving children, seniors, palliative care, the autism spectrum, bereavement support, burn units, rehabilitation, and more.

For every $50 you can sponsor one hour of music therapy. Donors receive a charitable tax receipt for the full amount, and 100% of your donation will go to local music therapy programs.

Donate during the 12 Days Of Music campaign from Dec. 13-24, and be entered into a daily prize draw for cool music items from Roland Canada, Skullcandy, Live Nation, Coastal Jazz, Logiix, and more.

Give the gift of music this year at www.12DaysOfMusic.com

For more information on Music Heals, visit www.musicheals.ca, or find them on Instagram and Twitter at @MusicHeals_ca.

What does music make you feel or do? Share your answer using the hashtag #MusicMakesMe

MUSIC HEALS
Give the Gift
of Music
Purchase an hour of music therapy
for those that need it most.
From December 13th - 24th all donors will
be entered to win daily prizes for cool
music items from Roland, Skullcandy,
Coastal Jazz, Logiix, and more.
Donors receive a full charitable tax
receipt and 100% of your donation will
go to local music therapy programs.
www.12DaysOfMusic.com

Help stop the cycle of violence

Almost everyone knows a woman who has been affected by domestic violence because it happens in every postal code.

In the past 25 years, the Helping Spirit Lodge Society has helped over 10,000 women and children escape domestic violence. Their philosophy is unique: The cycle of violence need not be passed on to the next generation; it can be stopped here. But interrupting this cycle requires both intervention and reconstruction.

When you give a donation as a present to the Helping Spirit Lodge Society, 100 per cent of the proceeds support women in a number of different programs including counseling, employment, housing, child minding, therapy, trauma informed yoga, acupuncture, and many more.

"When we opened our doors at the transition house we could never have dreamed that 25 years later we would have created a continuum of services that span so many

CONTRIBUTED

needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence," said Tabitha Geraghty, executive director.

The society is an instrument of direction and change for the community as a whole, since it replaces violent and coercive behaviours with those of mutual respect and understanding.

Christmas donations help to create memories and help victims overcome the trauma of domestic violence while giving women and children hope for the future.

"This is an opportunity for you to make a change in the cycle of domestic violence for a family," Geraghty said. "You can also make your tax deductible donation in honor of the difficult journey faced by someone you know."

RESTORING SIGHT & HOPE

Anita, a young Nepalese mother, can tell you how devastating it is to watch your three-year-old son's face fade away. She can tell you how hard it is to miss the special moments in your child's life as you slowly lose your sight.

This holiday season consider what it might be like to lose your sight, to miss watching the children in your life light up from joy.

For women and girls like Anita living in developing countries, losing sight means losing everything.

Two out of three of the world's blind are women. Ninety per cent live in the developing world. Beyond a lack of access to care and financial resources, women's needs are often not prioritized by male-headed households. Yet without vision, they cannot work or live independently and become more vulnerable to poverty, ill-treatment and abuse.

Anita knows this all too well. As her vision worsened, her husband started treating her poorly and she was forced to live with relatives; she could no longer care for herself or her son. The greatest tragedy of Anita's story is that her vision loss was simply due to cataracts — an easily solvable problem that costs only $50 to fix.

Anita visited a hospital but couldn't afford the surgery. Thankfully, because of Seva Canada donors, Anita's costs were covered. With her vision restored, Anita plans to become a tailor, open her own business, and take care of her son. Anita's life has changed profoundly.

CONTRIBUTED

Restoring sight has a huge impact. It fights poverty by empowering women and girls to return to school, work and a life of independence.

This holiday season a generous donor is matching all gifts for women and girls*, so you can double your impact. A $50 donation becomes $100 and provides sight-restoring cataract surgery for two women. Donate at seva.ca

**A Seva donor has offered to match any donation you make from now until Dec. 31, up to $1,000.*

MAKE A DONATION THAT MAKES A

Difference

DONATING TODAY CAN HAVE A **BIG IMPACT** ON A **WOMEN AND CHILD'S LIFE**

To learn more about the support we provide and to donate visit **hsls.ca**

HSLS is the leading Aboriginal women's organization in the Lower Mainland to alleviate family violence and enhance community wellness through a traditional, holistic approach. Charitable Registration # 13381 1406 RT0001

A $50 DONATION IS GOOD FOR TWO CATARACT SURGERIES.

This holiday season, support eye care for women and girls and your donation will be matched. $50 becomes $100 and provides life-changing cataract surgery for 2 women in the developing world.

Donate at seva.ca or call 1-877-460-6622.

Seva CANADA

metro TRAVEL

Your essential daily news

Kathy Griffin says her first-ever Carnival Cruise Lines comedy routines will rock the boat

Embracing America and Cuba

Lance McMillan
For Metro Canada

Dec. 17 will mark one year since U.S. President Barack Obama ordered the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba.

As it stands now, restrictions imposed by the embargo have only been eased through executive action and pertain mainly to travel and telecommunication. But change, albeit small, can be readily seen.

Walking down the streets of Havana, it is not unusual to see locals wearing clothing adorned with the American flag. Even taxis with American flags hanging in the window or dangling from rearview mirrors have become commonplace.

The island nation cannot yet fully embrace any real change, however, as it is up to Congress to lift the embargo that went into effect back in 1961. While the previous 113th Congress may have been one of the most unproductive congresses in U.S. history, the current 114th Congress seems to be on a better track.

So if you're planning on escaping the cold Canadian winter, Cuba should be on the top of your list as it may be the last chance to see it in its current state.

ALL PHOTOS BY LANCE MCMILLAN

TRAVEL NOTES BALI BARGAIN, FANCY LUGGAGE

Lombok is just one island east of Bali. CONTRIBUTED

Indonesia deal
Save up to $540 on Contiki's new eight-day Bali Island hopper trip when you book and pay before Dec. 23. With a shortie trip, you only have to take five days off work to hang out on Bali, Gili Trawangan and Lombok, one of the world's top hot spots.

Besides island hopping, you'll be snorkelling and surfing, staying in four-star hotels and enjoying amazing Indonesian cuisine. Visit Contiki.com.

The new Quartermaster Homme carryon. CONTRIBUTED

Ultimate carry-on
What to get the man who has everything? The perfect suitcase, of course. The new Ebby Rane Quartermaster Homme luxury carry-on keeps him organized, with seven inner pouches that fit together, guiding the packing process so nothing gets forgotten — ties, shoes, tech gear, shaving essentials, etc. A stylish little slice of Italian leather heaven. $1,230, at EbbyRane.com.

The new Iberostar Playa Pilar, Cuba. CONTRIBUTED

New Cuba hotel
Just in time for the influx of American tourists, Iberostar Playa Pilar has opened on Key Guillermo in the Jardines del Rey archipelago, the hotel chain's 11th resort in Cuba. With 480+ rooms, the five-star resort faces the world's second-longest coral reef, and offers a flawless beach, three restaurants, plus a ton of water sports and nautical pursuits to help pass the time. Visit Iberostar.com. DOUG WALLACE

Fly off to the Panhandle this winter

FLORIDA'S HIDDEN GEM

Bohemian hamlet, oyster capital among road trip stops

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

This time of year, sun-seekers look south to Florida for an easy winter warm-up. But while the Sunshine State is mostly known for its massive family theme parks or Miami's nightlife, there is an overlooked side that's equally as enchanting: the Panhandle. Here's a quick look at the best of the state's northern coastline.

Pensacola

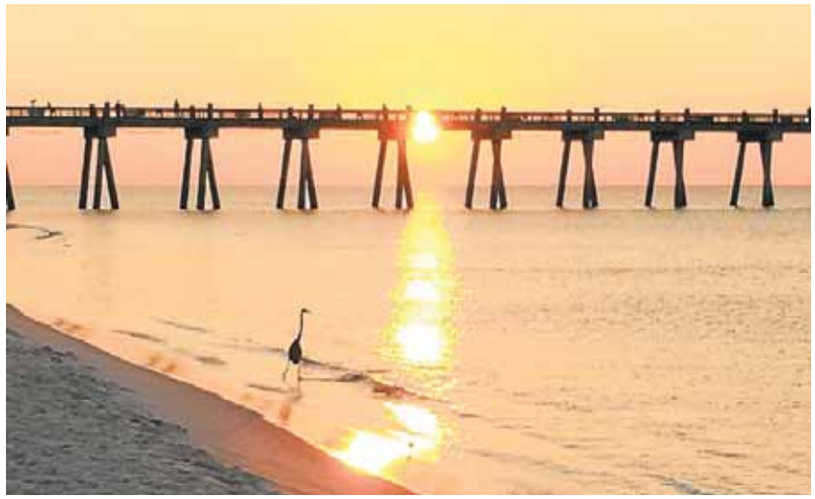
A great starting place, Pensacola delivers the liveliness of a major city alongside an eight-mile stretch of unspoiled beach that's practically deserted this time of year. Relax in the sun or wander around Fort Pickens — a well-preserved Civil War-era garrison located at the beach's western tip that notably included Apache warrior Geronimo among its historic internees.

For airplane buffs, the National Naval Aviation Museum is a world-class gallery complete with more than 150 aircraft, flight simulators and an IMAX theatre. Stay at the Margaritaville Beach Hotel and watch dolphins splash from your balcony as the spectacular sun rises over the Pensacola Pier.

The Emerald Coast

East of Pensacola, this beautiful coastline doesn't just possess pristine beaches but the unique town of Destin (known as the "World's Luckiest Fishing Village") is where anglers can reel in deep-water fish thanks to a nearby 100-foot underwater drop-off.

As you travel further east, don't miss Grayton Beach — a bohemian hamlet with one of the most idyllic beaches in America. While there, grab a drink at The Red Bar, a funky jazz club that's hosted such celebrities as Sheryl Crow within its kitschy art-covered walls. Finish the day at Panama City Beach with its many garish roadside attractions of go-karts and pirate-themed mini-golf.



The Pensacola Pier in front of the Margaritaville Beach Hotel at sunrise. STEVE GOW/FOR METRO

The Forgotten Coast

Before the coastline begins to curl south lies Florida's most seductive secret — the Forgotten Coast. The historic town of Apalachicola bleeds charm with its Victorian architecture and old brick warehouses. Once a main port for the cotton-boom era, Apalachicola is now the oyster capital of Florida, evident by the thousands of shucked shells adorning gardens and walkways. Try fresh mollusks at the popular Owl Café where you can wash the delicacies down with local ale from Oyster City Brewery.

For a real antebellum experience, stay at the Gibson Inn, a 108-year-old mansion wrapped in wide, white porches. For a great day trip, drive 90 minutes north to Wakulla Springs State Park to swim amongst endangered manatees and stop in Sopchoppy en route for a glimpse at the mysterious white squirrels that inexplicably inhabit the area — truly a wonder to behold.

LOCAL EATS

Sno-balls
A popular treat of shaved ice topped with a variety of flavoured syrups and cream is best served near Pensacola at Tommy's Sno-Balls — a beloved roadside shack with hundreds of varieties that include kitschy names like Worm Juice and Alligator Blood.

Grouper sandwich
In Florida's Panhandle, you can't go wrong with any fresh local seafood; however, the grouper sandwich is a Gulf Coast specialty. A meaty, light white fish, the grouper makes for a very flavourful feast whether grilled, fried or blackened.

Tupelo honey
Produced in the Apalachicola region, this rare liquid treasure is a top-grade nectar with the distinction of being the only honey in the world that won't granulate.

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Making Disney an even more magical kingdom

ORLANDO

Parks get boost in technology, new offerings

Vawn Himmelsbach
For Metro Canada

If you haven't been to Disney World in a while (or ever), the parks are making big changes — all designed to improve the guest experience.

From "smart" MagicBands to revamped offerings at the newly rebranded Disney Springs — not to mention a cool new Star Wars adventure — there's plenty of magic happening in Orlando, Fla.

And there are special deals for Canadians to help offset the decline of the loonie.

Disney Springs (formerly Downtown Disney) has been undergoing a complete transformation, with the addition of new neighbourhoods slated for completion this summer.

"Most of the change is happening in The Landing, a true retail and dining complex," said Darcy Clark, marketing manager for Disney Springs. "This is all about the dining."

A notable addition is Morimoto Asia, from Japanese master chef Masaharu Morimoto — known for his appearances on Iron Chef America — featuring pan-Asian cuisine such as Peking duck. More restaurants are slated to open in 2016.

Town Center is a brand-new neighbourhood for shoppers, currently under construction. "Our guests tell us when they're on vacation they want to shop — and not just for Mickey sweatshirts and Tinker Bell coffee mugs," said Clark. "They want designer handbags." Town Center will feature more than 60 third-party retailers, including the likes of Zara, Tommy Bahama, UGG and Sprinkles Cupcakes.

Over the past year, Disney has continued to roll out a number of enhancements it announced in 2014, including MagicBands, FastPass+ and a mobile app.

With MyDisneyExperience.com and the accompanying mobile app, guests can plan their trip, make changes on the go, purchase theme park tickets, make dining reservations and view an interactive map (as well as wait times for rides).

While wait times have been an issue in the parks, Disney has responded with FastPass+, allowing guests to reserve access to rides, shows or Disney character greetings either in advance or the day of their visit (wait times can be reduced from well over an hour to five or 10 minutes). Guests can make up to three selections at one park per day: Magic Kingdom, Animal Kingdom, Hollywood Studios and Epcot.

The MagicBand is an RF-enabled wristband that connects guests to the choices they made online. It serves as park admission and access to FastPass+ experiences, as well as a room key and optional payment method within the parks.

And, in the coming months and years, there will be new attractions to experience within the four parks.

This month will see the launch of the new Star Wars Launch Bay exhibit at Hollywood Studios, inspired by the latest film in the franchise, Star Wars: The Force Awakens. A Star Wars land will begin construction in 2016. And in 2017, Disney will launch The World of Avatar in Animal Kingdom with a ride called Na'vi River Journey.

FOR CANUCKS

To address the declining loonie, Disney's Canadian office is offering Canucks a discount on a package for a family of four that includes a five-night stay at a participating hotel with four-day theme park tickets, for travel completed by July 1, 2016. Another option is the Art of Animation Resort, which Disney opened in 2012 as a value-add budget property, ideal for kids with its Nemo-themed pool and Pixel Play arcade.

Animal Kingdom is bringing to life the mythical world of Pandora, inspired by the movie Avatar. CONCEPT ART, WALT DISNEY IMAGINEERING

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How flyers can make a smooth getaway

TRANSIT SERVICES

Cab-free ways to get to and from the airport in various cities

Loren Christie
For Metro Canada

Getting to and from the airport is often a last-minute consideration when planning your vacation. While taking a cab, car service or driving are options, it is worth investigating the more budget-friendly choices available. Cheapflights.ca recently released a compilation of the best alternatives for getting to and from the airport.

Toronto

There is a couple of choices available when making your way to and from Toronto's Pearson International. Toronto's public transit system (TTC) offers the cheapest option but the $3 fee requires you to schlepp your suitcase onto a bus to Kipling Station where you then transfer over to the subway.

A comfortable yet more expensive alternative is the Union Pearson Express, which speeds you between the airport and downtown Toronto's Union Station in just 25 minutes, with trains departing every 15 minutes between 5:30 a.m. to 1 a.m. A one-way fare is $27.50.

Vancouver

Getting between downtown and Vancouver International Airport is relatively easy. Located on Sea Island in Richmond, YVR is connected to the downtown via the convenient Canada Line Translink service.

A fantastic added convenience is the airport check-in kiosks at the following Canada Line stations: YVR-Airport, Templeton, Bridgeport, Marine Drive, Broadway-City Hall, Olympic Village, Vancouver City Centre and Richmond-Brighouse. The fares vary slightly, but expect to pay approximately $10.

Montreal

The 747 bus line runs between the Montréal-Trudeau airport and the central bus station downtown 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Depending on traffic, the trip can take between 45 and 60 minutes and the cost is $10, which actually buys you 24 hours of service throughout the STM bus and métro network.

IN ENGLAND

When it comes to convenience the London Underground is incredible. With regular service to and from all terminals to Central London you can get to any destination within the London transport network on a one-way ticket that will cost you roughly $10. The duration is between 60 and 80 minutes, depending on the destination.

Alternatively you can take the Heathrow Express train, which travels between Heathrow and London's Paddington Station. The ride lasts about 20 minutes and tickets booked 90 days in advance can cost as little as $11 one-way and $33 when purchased on the day of travel.

Vancouver International Airport is connected to the downtown via the convenient Canada Line Translink service. ED BIERMAN (FLICKR: EDBIERMAN)

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metro SPORTS

Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool topped their Europa League group after a 0-0 draw with FC Sion while Spurs also topped their group by beating Monaco 4-1

Canucks prospect sizzles

FUTURE STARS

Demko twice named Hockey East goalie of the month

Cam Tucker
Metro | Vancouver

Thatcher Demko has a .945 save percentage for Boston College. MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES

The accolades came swiftly for Canucks' prospect Thatcher Demko. Twice already this season, he's been named the Hockey East goalie of the month.

A junior with Boston College, Demko had a run of six shutouts in seven starts. He leads the conference in numerous goaltending categories, including a .945 save percentage with a minimum of 40 per cent team minutes played, heading into Thursday's game against Notre Dame.

All of this following surgery in the spring to repair torn labrums in both hips.

"Obviously, the surgery, it's a full year until you're 100 per cent," said Demko, Vancouver's second-round pick in 2014. "I think if I continue to get stronger and continue my rehab process, I'll be able to hit a new level beyond what I'm at now."

He expressed in the summer how pleased he was, to that point, following the operation. It's five months later, and he can still tell that he's had the surgery.

He was back on skates by July, but still awaiting the date when he could strap on the pads. Goalie specific training was expected to start at the end of July, which didn't leave him much time to prepare for the start of the upcoming season.

"With my condition that I was in the last four or five seasons, I was kind of forced to play a certain style just because that's all I could do physically.

> **"After the surgery, I felt more free with my range of motion, my flexibility and all these different things.**
> Thatcher Demko on life after hip repair

"After the surgery, I felt more free with my range of motion, my flexibility and all these different things and now I find myself playing a little bit different technically just because I can.

"It was almost like I was broken down to a foundation and I was able to rebuild different types of playing and I could make myself the goalie I wanted to be."

Despite his early success, Demko admitted there was some rust to shake off.

"Your confidence is a little shaken coming back from surgery. Am I coming back too early? Did the surgeon fix everything he needed to?" he said.

"There's so many concerns that are going through your head as you're coming back and you have to trust the process. For me, I was definitely rusty and I didn't know what to expect when I came back."

Veteran Hamhuis needs surgery to fix facial fracture

The Vancouver Canucks will be without Dan Hamhuis for an undetermined period of time, after the veteran defenceman took a puck to the face causing a facial fracture.

The incident occurred in the third period of Wednesday's 2-1 victory against the New York Rangers.

Hamhuis was struck in the face by the puck on a rising slap shot. He skated off with the help of teammates and training staff, leaving a trail of blood on the ice, before being taken out of Rogers Arena on a stretcher, according to multiple reports. He is scheduled to undergo surgery on Friday, the Canucks announced via Twitter, and a timeline for a possible return hasn't been determined.

That leaves the Canucks with two injured left-shooting defencemen — the other being Luca Sbisa, currently on the injured list — as they depart on this six-game road trip.

Hamhuis, 32, had struggled at points in this season but still plays an important role as a top-four defenceman. His absence likely means a bigger role for either Ben Hutton or Matt Bartkowski, not to mention Yannick Weber, who was scratched from the lineup Wednesday.

The Canucks, already with Alex Biega on their roster and currently on call from Utica, could dip back into the farm system to bring up another defenceman.

The Canucks begin the trip Sunday against the Chicago Blackhawks.

Vancouver made another roster move Thursday, assigning forward Ronalds Kenins back to the AHL.

CAM TUCKER/METRO

Dan Hamhuis was struck in the mouth by the puck during Wednesday's against the Rangers. DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

HOCKEY

Oliers honour Sather

Fifteen years after Glen Sather left the organization, the Edmonton Oilers will raise their former coach and executive's banner to the rafters at Rexall Place on Friday night.

He will be alongside the numbers of Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, Jari Kurri, Paul Coffey, Glenn Anderson, Grant Fuhr, Al Hamilton and those celebrating five Stanley Cups and many more division and conference titles.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rangers' coach Vigneault closes in on game 1,000

Alain Vigneault will coach his 1,000th NHL game on Friday when his New York Rangers visit the Edmonton Oilers. The Quebec City native was in his late 30s and leading the Montreal Canadiens in the 2000-01 season when he was blindsided by an abrupt firing just over three years in.

In 2006, Vigneault was hired as coach of the Vancouver Canucks.

Vancouver made the playoffs and Vigneault won coach of the year in his first campaign. Two Presidents' trophies followed, but Vancouver bowed out in the first round of the playoffs in 2012 and 2013, leading to his dismissal. He was later hired by the Rangers.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Goalie's suspension leads to competition

A mistake by Mackenzie Blackwood has opened up the competition for Canada's No. 1 goaltender at the world junior hockey championship.

Blackwood was Canada's presumptive starter for the upcoming international tournament until he earned an eight-game suspension in the Ontario Hockey League on Tuesday after slashing an opponent in the shoulder. He'll sit the first two games of the world juniors in Helsinki, leaving Mason McDonald to start for Canada against the United States and Denmark.

"I'm just going to take it as it is," said Blackwood on Thursday night after the first practice of Canada's selection camp.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The wait is over ... Aldo and McGregor ready for battle

UFC

No love lost as cocky Irishman insists he'll beat proven champ

Jose Aldo is the only featherweight champion in UFC history. The brilliant Brazilian star is widely considered the pound-for-pound best mixed martial artist in the world. He hasn't lost a fight in 10 years.

And yet in the casinos of Las Vegas, Aldo is a betting underdog in the main event of UFC 194 on Saturday night.

Behold the power of Conor McGregor, the loquacious Irish challenger who has persuaded the world he can end 2015 by dethroning a king.

"He is already beaten," McGregor said. "I look in his eyes, and I see someone who knows his era is over. It's a new era. It's my era. I almost want to comfort him. I want to say, 'Don't worry. It will all be over soon.'"

A year of promotional hype and fan anticipation culminates at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in the main event of the biggest show on a huge three-day weekend of UFC fights.

Aldo (25-1) and McGregor (18-2) have traded innumerable insults and menacing glares during the buildup to this injury-delayed showdown. It's finally time to find out whether McGregor can back up some of the most delicious bravado in recent sports history.

UFC featherweight champion Jose Aldo faces off with interim UFC featherweight champion Conor McGregor, right, during the final pre-fight news conference for UFC 194 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Wednesday. LAS VEGAS SUN VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"I get in there, and I put on a show," McGregor said. "I come to fight, and this fight will be a performance. I'm not just going to beat Jose. I'm going to embarrass Jose in there. I don't need to gather any more intel, any more research. It's done. He has already lost."

> **He is already beaten. I look in his eyes, and I see someone who knows his era is over. It's a new era. It's my era.**
> Ireland's Conor McGregor on champ Jose Aldo

While McGregor's personality is both magnetic and divisive, Aldo is no wallflower himself, as evidenced by his testy relations with the UFC for the past few years. He has reacted with amusement and anger to McGregor's provocations while adding his own jabs, albeit without the inimitable showmanship of McGregor's rants.

"I'm going to hit him, and he's going to sleep," Aldo said through a translator. "I don't really care how I win. I care about winning. Really the only difference is I always beat Americans, and this time I'm going to beat an Irishman."

Aldo could say little when he was injured in training shortly before he was originally scheduled to meet McGregor in July, scrapping an elaborate promotional campaign and providing more fodder for his challenger. McGregor took on the highly regarded Chad Mendes instead, scoring a second-round stoppage and earning an interim belt.

That honour didn't satisfy McGregor, whose plans for world domination aren't confined to one weight class or even one endeavour ("Hollywood is screaming for me," he said).

McGregor has attracted global attention to the grateful UFC, which has heavily showcased his magnetism and verbosity. He has become a fan favourite — particularly among his countrymen, who filled Vegas' casinos with songs and revelry before and after his victory over Mendes.

"I think it's going to be an electric atmosphere," McGregor said. "I feel the Brazilians will come out to support. They're going to be swallowed by the Irish, though. It's going to be a green Christmas in Las Vegas, that's for sure."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOLF

Brooke's goals for 2016

Golfer Brooke Henderson had two dreams come true this year: she became a member of the LPGA Tour and won her first tournament at that level.

She's setting her sights even higher in 2016. Henderson hopes to continue her ascent on the top women's professional golf circuit and also lead Canada to the podium when the sport makes its return to the Olympic program next summer in Rio.

"It's an amazing opportunity that I have just to play in the Olympics and to play on the LPGA Tour. They're both dreams that I've had since I was young."

Henderson, a former top-ranked amateur, showed this past season that she was the real deal. Her statement performance came in August at the Cambia Portland Classic, when she blew away the field with a whopping eight-stroke victory.

Henderson was about three weeks shy of her 18th birthday at the time. She was granted immediate LPGA Tour membership by commissioner Mike Whan after the win.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Brooke Henderson GETTY IMAGES

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RECIPE Mini Turkey Meatloaves

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

These meatloaves are great to make ahead and freeze — then you can pull out as many (or as few) as you need on any given night.

Ready in
Prep time: 60 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/3 cup onion, diced fine
- 1/3 cup celery, diced fine
- 1/3 cup carrot, diced fine
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1/2 cup of rolled oats
- 1 1/2 lb of ground turkey
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup Parmesan, grated
- 2 Tbsp ketchup
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

Directions
1. Preheat the oven to 375 F.
2. Warm up olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add your vegetables and the fennel seeds and allow them to soften, about 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool a bit.
3. In a large mixing bowl, place meat, oats, ketchup, sauteed vegetables, cheese and a whisked egg. Mix it all together thoroughly — you want each bite to have a mix of all the elements.
4. Using a 1/3 cup measure, scoon mixture and place each scoop into a cup of a muffin tin. In a small bowl, mix together 2 Tbsp of ketchup and 1 tsp of Worcestershire sauce. Use a small spoon to smear this glaze over the top of your mini meatloaves.
5. Bake for 40 minutes. The internal temperature for meatloaf should be 160 to 165 F.

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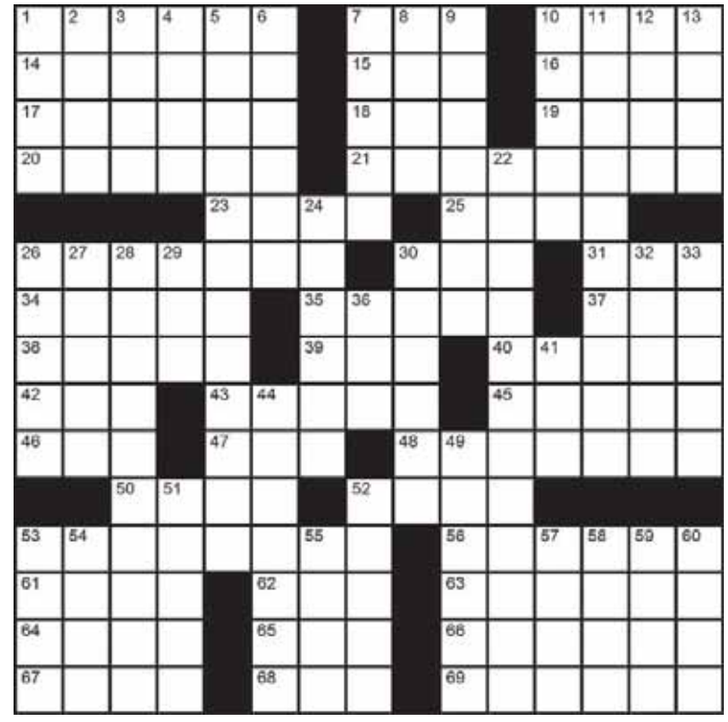
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd __ of care..." - Macbeth, Act II, Scene 2
7. Joan of __
10. Cried
14. __ __ pants
15. __ polloi
16. Some: 2 wds.
17. Mosaic components
18. Ms. DeGeneres, to pals
19. Single-named rock bassist
20. Bahamas capital
21. Prized-players
23. Alum
25. 'Class' or 'Luck' suffix
26. Javas
30. Ms. Field of movies, to pals
31. Financial deg.
34. Precise
35. Pedestal
37. Western prov.
38. 1970s music
39. Klutz
40. Feigned cry of enthusiasm: 2 wds.
42. Want __ (Newspaper section)
43. Ms. Shriver
45. Some space objects
46. Ms. McEntire, briefly
47. Hill-building insect
48. Archived documents
50. Better Than __ (Rock band)
52. Alberta village southeast of Calgary
53. In a sincere manner
56. "That's groovy with me.": 2 wds.
61. Certain conjunctions
62. Not 'neath
63. Ms. Dion of song
64. Leave in, in proofreading
65. Ms. Lambert of country, to pals
66. Some wading birds
67. __ de combat (Out of action)
68. Impatient shout!
69. Computer clickety-click-clickers

DOWN
1. Rotate
2. Moon goddess
3. Building additions
4. Woeful word
5. From Earth, one would take approximately six to eight months: 3 wds.
6. Make certain/check
7. Up in front
8. Breadbasket bun
9. Irish actor Mr. Murphy of new whale adventure "In the Heart of the Sea" (2015)
10. Drifts through the air
11. "Op.23, No.6, Prelude in _-_ __" by Russian composer/pianist Rachmaninoff
12. Equal
13. Christmas poem opener...
22. Newfoundland: Locale on Fogo Island for those who rarely-stop-over?
24. Classify
26. Aromatic tree
27. Zinc __ (Skin irritation cream)
28. Michael who plays the Scottish lead in "Macbeth" (2015)
29. US broadcasting regulator
30. Journey amongst the lions
32. 1990: Madonna's __ Ambition World Tour
33. Chasm
36. __ Chi (Martial Art)
41. Owl's utterance
44. "__ of a Murder" (1959) starring James Stewart
49. Draw out a response
51. Piquancies
52. Christmastime resin
53. Mixture
54. Not duped: 2 wds.
55. "Star Wars" (1977) role
57. Bit from a movie
58. Van Gogh's Bank of the __ at Auvers
59. Humdinger
60. Fewer

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
Everything should be going well for you now and today's new moon in your fellow Fire sign of Sagittarius will make life even more enjoyable.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Today's new moon puts emphasis on finances, especially investments and property issues and anything of a monetary nature that involves other people. Lady Luck is smiling on you, so make some profitable moves.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
If you have fallen out with a partner, loved one or friend, or even a work colleague, this is the perfect day to get back on good terms with them. You may have to admit you were wrong but it will be worth it.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
It's unlikely you will be impressed by someone's aggressive attitude. Do not, however, try to confront them. They just got out of the wrong side of bed this morning.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Today's new moon urges you not to limit yourself in any way, shape or form. Creatively and professionally you are at the top of your game, so be active, be ambitious and above all be assertive.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Get tough with someone. If you don't do it now it will mean an even bigger showdown later on, so let them know where they are going wrong and what they can do to make it right.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Cosmic activity in the area of your chart that governs your ability to communicate makes it easy for you to win people over. Use that ability to get others to do the small stuff while you focus on the big picture.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
If you get an offer that could bring you money you should take it. It will mean more work and you will have to sacrifice other things but if you turn it down you will kick yourself later.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Look out for your own interests and do something for yourself for a change. Today's new moon in your sign promises great things will happen. You deserve your success.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You may be tempted to give up on something today but the planets warn if you stop now you will regret it later in the month. Keep going. You are on the brink of a breakthrough.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
This is a good time for friendships and group activities but don't spread yourself thin. Where your work and creative activities are concerned don't start anything new because what happens tomorrow will require all your attention and energy.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
You may be ambitious but the planets warn you won't be able to reach your goals alone. Look for people who can assist you and ask for help.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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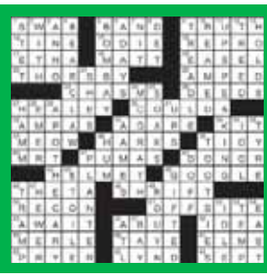

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